

THE STATE OF
SHAKESPEARE STUDY

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SHAKESPEARE STUDY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE GENUINE IN SHAKESPEARE : A Conspectus

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"HAMLET" ONCE MORE

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CROCE AS SHAKESPEAREAN CRITIC

ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

THE STATE OF SHAKESPEARE STUDY

A CRITICAL CONSPECTUS

BY

J. M. ROBERTSON

*Author of "The Genuine in Shakespeare"
"Marlowe . a Conspectus," etc.*

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DEDICATED
WITH PROPER RESPECT
TO THAT
VARIOUSLY LEARNED AND MAGNANIMOUS
BODY
THE BRITISH ACADEMY

NOTE

THE article on "The Dilemmas of Professor Dover Wilson," is a reprint, with fresh notes and a "Postscript," of one entitled "On Shakespearean Idolatry," which appeared in the *Criterion* of January, 1930. I have to thank the Editor for the permission to reproduce it. The rest of the volume is new matter, also evoked by attacks or criticisms; and the fresh notes and "Postscript" referred to deal with the article "Idolatry and Scepticism in Shakespearean Studies: a Reply to Mr. J. M. Robertson," by Professor Dover Wilson, in the *Criterion* number dated July, 1930.

J.M.R.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	NOTE	vii
	PREFACE TO EXPLAIN THE DEDICATION .	I

PART I

ON SHAKESPEAREAN FOLIOLATRY

I.	THE DILEMMAS OF PROFESSOR DOVER WILSON	13
	§ 1. THE STATUS OF SHAKESPEARE STUDY .	13
	§ 2. THE SCANDAL OF DISINTEGRATION .	16
	§ 3. DISPARAGEMENT <i>versus</i> DISINTEGRA- TION: PHÆTON IN CHARGE .	23
	§ 4. PROFESSOR WILSON'S <i>felo-de-se</i> .	27
	§ 5. UNLEARNED LEARNING . . .	34
	§ 6. BLUNDERS OF THE NEWER ORTHODOXY	39
	§ 7. POSTSCRIPT	43
II.	THE FEARS AND HOPES OF PROFESSOR LAS- CELLES ABERCROMBIE	50
	§ 1. WHAT SEEMS TO BE FEARED . . .	50
	§ 2. SHAKESPEARE'S "RESPONSIBILITIES" .	55
	§ 3. THE CONCEPT OF ÆSTHETIC CRITICISM	61
	§ 4. THE LOGIC OF THE PROFESSOR .	67
	§ 5. A PREDICTED REVOLUTION . . .	76

PART II

THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

CHAP.	PAGE
I. A CRITICISM IN THE "TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT"	81
II. ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES	87
III. MORE ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES	93
IV. THE BURDENS OF MR. JOHN BAILEY	100
V. ORTHODOX SUPPORT FROM PROFESSOR LEGOUIS	107
VI. A DANISH INTERVENTION	117
VII. THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY	144
VIII. SUMMARY	168
IX. SUGGESTIONS	175
§ 1. TRADITIONISM AND ÆSTHETIC EDUCATION	175
§ 2. TRADITIONISM AND TEXT-CORRUPTION	180
§ 3. TRADITIONISM AND MORAL STANDARDS	187
INDEX	195

PREFACE

TO EXPLAIN THE DEDICATION

NO well-regulated mind can fail to sympathise with the Council of the British Academy in its annual task of appointing somebody, preferably a Professor, to vindicate the editorial sacrosanctity of the Shakespeare Folio. A Fund exists, appropriated to the purpose ; and Funds, like Folios, are sacred things, in a nation in which a clerical incumbent, as such, is a proprietor equally with the owner of an advowson. But Funds, as in the historic case of that acquired by Mr. Lloyd George, can be sources of tension. Hence a growing tensivity in the situation in which it must be annually affirmed, as against iconoclastic heresy, that all pretences to find any hand but Shakespeare's in the sacred volume are matter for academic scorn, nay, mirth.

Not that the list of potential defenders of the fortress is yet nearly exhausted. Is not Mr. John Bailey on hand, prepared to affirm that all disintegrators are under the weird delusion that a given artist can be always " at his best," a counter-sense which Mr. Bailey has convinced himself, after a careful study of Milton, to be fallacious. " Even " Milton,

as he earnestly urges on us, could not be always "at his best." And Mr. Bailey can be provided with an audience which, after intense reflection, will come to the conclusion that, as "best" connotes "worse" and "worst"—for "even" that may occur to them, if not to him—all disintegrators must be fools. *Even* water, they will fervently agree with Mr. Bailey, cannot at all times be at its hottest.

After this triumph of strenuous ratiocination, the cause might be supposed secure for another year. Yes; but then Mr. Bailey, in fulfilling his heroic task of presenting Shakespeare as a National Possession, like the Church and the Constitution and the Public House and the Bible, has already been undermining the fortress in which he conducts the community-singing. He blasphemously declines to admit that anybody can believe Shakespeare to have written *TITUS ANDRONICUS*; this while the most newly accredited authorities are assuring us that Shakespeare did. And he has his unhappy doubts about the *HENRY VI* plays, this in the teeth of Mr. Peter Alexander, who has none, and will tolerate none.

It is doubtful whether even American aid is usefully available. Some of the best men over there callously impugn the bibliography of our bibliographers; and there is small sign that anybody, save Professors, now wants to keep *TITUS ANDRONICUS* in the Canon. "Even" the orthodox American Revisers, be it remembered, thought that the English Committee for the Revised Version did not revise enough. Professor Tucker Brooke, in Shakespeare

matters, is only a heretic with a difference, a law unto himself, accusing Shakespeare of spoiling Marlowe where Marlowe is revising himself, and of parodying Marlowe without proper passion. He might be "even" more perturbing than Professor Stoll.

Professor Legouis, it is true, was placidly listened to by his polite audience when he argued that Shakespeare in his youth had been a drunkard, albeit he latterly reformed. But people have been heard to say that Professor Legouis's logic was almost ultra-French, and that his peculiar modes of inference were quite too extensive. As for Germany, glad confident morning has not yet decisively dawned again.

Of course the Council of the Academy, quailing before the contumacy of "even" Mr. Bailey, might strategically mark time by commissioning Professor Budd to demonstrate that Shakespeare *must* have read Italian in order to write MEASURE FOR MEASURE. which, of course, he *must* have wholly written, as proved by Heminge and Condell. And if only Dr. Budd could be inspired by the happy lead of Professor Lascelles Abercrombie to insert a dozen respectable—and audible—jokes, a majority of the audience could be guaranteed to giggle with an amiable docility. The audience, at least, can be trusted to be faithful to that extent.

Then, if it came to the worst, Mr. Peter Alexander could be invited to assure the faithful that Shakespeare wrote :

When I was mortal, my anointed body
By thee was punched full of deadly holes,

and TITUS ANDRONICUS, and all the rest of it ; perhaps decorously adding, " Mr. Bailey be ——"—but imagination reels at the thought. For " even " Professor Alfred Pollard, under whose ægis Mr. Alexander has re-vindicated TITUS ANDRONICUS, has heedlessly laid his hands on the ark of Heminge and Condell, after having demonstrated that that sacred object was really entitled to intelligent respect. And then what ? As Professor Pollard has not perished in his pride, must not the ark be tottering, or at least doddering ?

Far be it from the present writer to endorse the indecorous language in which Sir (then Mr.) E. K. Chambers a quarter of a century ago, fuming over the problem of TITUS ANDRONICUS in his rubricated edition, protested that until the " more important universities " started some sort of critical discipline, so as to take the matter out of the hands of the mob of journalists and antiquaries, an editor did not know where he stood. Even the most acute editorial embarrassment, surely, did not justify the impropriety. Sir Edmund might safely make hay with British journalists and German Professors ; but, involving as he did the person of Professor Churton Collins, he was rudely flouting Birmingham.

To-day, doubtless, as member of Council of the Academy, he is thankful for Professor Lascelles Abercrombie ; and when he is grown so minded, who will deny that a score of chairs of English Literature may be drawn upon to assist in the application of the Fund ? If there should be difficulties over the re-

doubted Mr. Peter Alexander, who has been disrespectful enough to indicate that Sir E. K. Chambers himself had done a lot of poacherish disintegrating before he turned gamekeeper (or Fund-holder) and is therefore tainted with heresy, there are still Professors in other colleges, and even universities (though all, as Mr. Bailey would justly insist, cannot be "the more important"), ready to earn an honest fee by at least saying *something* not too controversial about Shakespeare in the interests of orthodoxy. Nobody, of course, would ask for any new independent thought or research on the subject, while there is heresy to be hunted.

And still, the Academy can hardly escape a sense of insecurity. For one hears that in the "more important universities," with or without discipline, all is not well. I am not at all sure, for instance, that my young friend Mr. Bonamy Dobrée would label *TITUS ANDRONICUS*, as he does *ALL FOR LOVE*, "a proud and lovely masterpiece," even for a "country schoolmaster." He is perhaps not fated to carry his point as to Dryden; but his generation, wherever it may find rest for its foot, does not seem friendly to Foliolatry. And there is another trouble ahead. The research entitled "The Shakespeare Canon" will sooner or later come to a close, doubtless to the relief of many, and moratorial decorum may be found to dictate a change of topic for the Annual Lecture. It cannot always hover over one order of heretic.

The President, of course, who can never with

propriety be expected to know much about the subject, can always genially announce at the close that the lecture has been most interesting and instructive ; and the audience, being kindred adepts, will cordially agree. But there are others, who may one day brutally raise the question whether an annual entertainment of courageous community-singing over a serious problem of scholarship is a fitting output for the British Academy in the matter of Shakespeare study. Disrespectful things, it is whispered, are being said abroad. There are even Germans who draw disparaging parallels between the audience of the good old Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft and the cultured recipients of the annual British Academy lecture.

And then there is always that irksome consideration that even the annual lecturers for the Funded British Academy should not reveal themselves as either gratuitously ignorant of what they are talking about, or supererogatorily self-contradictory. (I apologise for the all too Academic octopedalian lapse.) Professor Dover Wilson, invoking the countenance of the ever-living theatre, revealed himself as complacently ignorant of the theatre's normal practice ; besides electing to proclaim a theatrical canon which he obviously proceeded to destroy. Professor Lascelles Abercrombie (who echoes the canon without perceiving the cancelment) even went the length of implying that PERICLES is in the First Folio ; and crowingly delivered dicta about the absence of documents, in terms which indicated that he merely did

not know what the relevant documents were. As to his logic, more anon, in our text.

Mr. Peter Alexander, in turn, is *capable de tout*. Greatly daring, under the imprimatur of Professor A. W. Pollard, he has assured his startled readers that the famous phrase of Greene about "his Tiger's heart" can only mean "his absurd line about the tiger's heart." The dazed reader, who knows the literary practice of Greene and the taste of the Elizabethan theatre, is thus forced to perceive that Mr. Alexander knows nothing of either, though Professor Pollard, who distrusts all literary connoisseurship save his own and that of the deceased Dowden and Furnivall, editorially endorses the absurdity.

These things, to put it flatly, are really not seemly in Academic discourses. Granted that most people are as blissfully uninformed as Professor Abercrombie and Mr. Alexander, an Academy lecturer should possess a little more scholarly knowledge than an average reviewer. Ignorance leaks out, and the knowledge of it may make the judicious grieve, to say nothing of possible giggling in Gath. Metropolitan peculiarities of manner are venial in comparison with vivacious incompetence.

The object, then, of the present respectful preface is to suggest to our honoured body so styled that Academies should sometimes have an eye to their theoretic function, even where they have Funds to administer. There is the plain danger that they may make the Institution itself look ridiculous even to worldly eyes, to say nothing of the profane. The

spectacle of Professor Dover Wilson and Professor Lascelles Abercrombie tripping over their academic skirts, already matter for rude ridicule to the more intelligent reader, may become vaguely distasteful even to the non-academic audience which is collected on those occasions. Surely there is a way out, without tampering with the sanctity of the Fund.

There need be no extremes, no such "revolution" as Professor Abercrombie portentously predicts. His erudite school need not be called upon to extol the "profound" æsthetic "intention" of TITUS ANDRONICUS; and Sir Edmund Chambers, of course, will never suggest that anybody should revert to a justification of the "instinct" which once told him that there are alien hands in TIMON. But why not try just a good orthodox discussion on such a theme, say, as "Shakespeare's Alleged Use of the Split Infinitive in JULIUS CÆSAR and in a Sonnet"? The proper procedure, of course, would be to premise that all respectable people know that Shakespeare *must* have written the whole of JULIUS CÆSAR, and all the Sonnets; and then to argue, in the best manner of Professor Lascelles Abercrombie, as to whether the passage in JULIUS CÆSAR, Act II, scene i, line 187, is or is not a split infinitive, with an excursus on Sonnet 142, line 12. The audience probably would not be large; but what then? Scholarship would be vindicated.

And then there is the safe and sound theme of Shakespeare's "vast vocabulary." No research would be required. Henry Bradley is dead. There

might even be some sound community-singing on the subject ; all heresy being of course carefully ignored. That would be the only safe course. There are probably surviving pupils of Bradley, who might have statistical scruples, though he did not unduly press his. But " even " the less important colleges could surely be trusted to produce experts who would discourse quite learnedly on details in the vocabulary itself—*even* producing agreeable jokes. Thus things might be kept academic without letting them become provocative of disrespect, *even* if the audiences were small. (One seems to become hypnotised by Mr. Bailey's " even ".)

Perhaps, then, one may trust the Council of the Academy to receive these well-considered suggestions in the proper spirit. One retains a natural patriotic interest in the institutions of one's country, especially when they rank as at once intellectual and popular. And academics may be looked-to to cultivate the academic spirit. The present writer has been indignantly denounced by a reviewer in the *Morning Post* as persecuting respectable professors for their sincere opinions. The language used was even more violent than that. But of course we can all understand that in the world of the *Morning Post* (so notoriously averse from everything penal) there can be no ironical force in the lines :

Cet animal est très-méchant :
Quand on l'attaque, il se défend.

Finally, a short list of directions to lecturers on

Shakespeare might establish a reasonable standard of scholarlike qualification. As thus :

1. Be jocular, of course. *Cela soulage*. But remember that smirking facetiousness is after all the cue of the undergraduate rather than of the professor, however enlivening it may be to the London audience.

2. Be careful not to commit yourself in an unduly bumptious manner to judgments on subjects which any student can see you have never studied.

3. Remember that logic is not a mere clerkly exercise to embellish your chosen misrepresentation of a complicated issue, but a law applicable to your whole argumentation. Reflect that there may be judgment to come, and that the British Academy should not be made a laughing-stock. Its credit is finally more important than yours.

4. Having regard to the Name commemorated in your lecture, you will do well not to strut and fret twenty minutes *beyond* your hour upon the stage, even if you feel it *de rigueur* to strut and fret. A full-laden scholar may hold us long ; an uncunning sophister palls.

5. Try to be more or less continuously audible, even though you may justly claim that that is not the professorial practice. Students in class-room are perhaps not unready to go to sleep. Outsiders may be different.

6. Of course no one could fitly urge you to master the A B C of platform utterance. That is not the ideal of the Academy itself in its severer hours ; and University men recognise that clear utterance at

the desk is not gentlemanlike, perhaps forgetting that the other thing does not necessarily ensure the desired impression. But the Academy's lecturer should remember that he is for the nonce mediating between the B.A. and the B.P.

7. Therefore make it a rule at least not to address more than ten per cent of your remarks internally to your own œsophagus. The frequent swallowed ending, further, is probably not even hygienic.

Only seven points, not fourteen. With these, surely, we might decorously get on.

PART I

ON SHAKESPEAREAN FOLIOLATRY

CHAPTER I

THE DILEMMAS OF PROFESSOR DOVER WILSON

§ 1. *The Status of Shakespeare Study*

IT is still an open question whether there will ever be either an effective attainment or a general assimilation of what may be called scientific "Shakespeareology"—to use an ugly word which here saves the trouble of a long paraphrase. Thus far, it is the preoccupation of only a few hundreds of people, in various countries, and some count it esoteric. If we schematically arrange our social world into psychic "types," we at once place large circles for the multitudes interested in commerce, politics, sport (including travel), religion, literature, science and perhaps what are termed academic studies—including here philosophy and scholarship. All of these circles, save the last, are to be conceived as thickly populated. But when we attempt to map out literature in general, and scholarly academic studies in particular, we realise that whereas the mass of fiction-readers is practically co-extensive with nearly all the others together, the mass which critically reads literature

is a very small one. And still there are sub-sections to be made.

Of the largish but scattered multitude, for instance, who read Shakespeare, only a small number are at all ready to grapple with problems of morphology or discrimination of authorship. Even among students, most are averse from a "higher criticism" that incites doubt. On this as on questions of Biblical study, the natural primary attitude is conservative; the more so because so much challenging of orthodox belief has been done by way of Baconism or others of the *à priori* heresies of that order. In the case of these, the challenge has been in terms of an ignorance parading as special knowledge. Pseudo-science thus compromises inductive science. And even where the pseudo-science is detected and dismissed, it is doubtful whether the majority either possess or cultivate the faculty for appreciating scientific tests proper, save those which negate the spurious claims.

Hence, even in the far-scattered world of academic studies, where above all one looks for scientific investigation, the output of serious research includes only a small quantity of intellectually disinterested and "emancipated" Shakespearean work. In Biblical criticism, investigation has been carried on largely by professional scholars and theologians, on whom the problems involved were forced as a result of more than a century of earnest challenge and inquiry. In Shakespeare-study, so far, there has been no such effective impulsion. Its problems have been, as it were, static—the "philological" scrutiny

of texts and phraseology. Professors who have been expounding Shakespeare on that scholarly basis are as a rule very much unprepared for any large extension of the challenge to the authenticity of the Folio plays; though they have had to deal as best they can with the more limited challenges of the past. Even the newer bibliographical inquiries find them rather unresponsive. More radical challenges simply repel them.

Those, then, who patiently attempt a searching analysis of the material, with an eye to the problems of authorship, need look for little encouragement. What is more, they must be prepared for reversions and retardations, in respect of the chronic resurgence of that habit and temper of idolatry or iconolatry which so long resisted and retarded the higher criticism in matters Biblical. Probably nine out of ten "readers" of Shakespeare spontaneously repugn and resent the notion that much of what they have been reading all their lives as the work of the Master can possibly be the work of other men. And inasmuch as the orthodox are thus the great majority of the reading and listening "Shakespearean public," there is a perpetual pressure upon even the inquirers to feed Cerberus with sirloins, and stay him with flagons. Nay, there is their own inherited propensity to reckon with. The urge to so-called vindication belongs to the very habit as well as to the tradition of the study. And the very concept of "vindication" is thus vitiated.

§ 2. *The Scandal of Disintegration*

The situation is best illustrated by a concrete case. My friend Professor J. Dover Wilson, the accomplished co-editor of *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, has had hard measure meted to him in being classed as a "disintegrator" (with his co-editor) by the Grand Mandarin of the moment, Sir E. K. Chambers, who, having done some hand-to-mouth disintegration in his day, under temptation from past critics, has sought salvation in abjuring the revolutionary spirit, as he well might, having no fundamental affinities that way. To be dubbed a disintegrator by such a prelate of propriety is for some a disquieting experience; and my friend resists the imputation, even after his colleague has professed to welcome it. A disintegrator, in a modest way, Professor Wilson no doubt was. Had he not shown how by internal evidence (described as bibliographical) a number of the plays in the Folio reveal adaptations or alterations of prior texts? And that is vaguely disturbing, from the mandarin point of view. But was it fair to tar him and his co-editor with the blacking-brush properly applicable to more radical disturbers of the traditional peace?¹

¹ Mr. Wilson has published what he forensically terms a "reply" to the criticism hereinafter passed on him. It is chiefly remarkable for its abstention from reply, and sets out with a protest that his British Academy Lecture for 1929 was but a "May-day entertainment at Burlington House"—which seems not very respectful to the British Academy. But one of the "replies" he actually makes is to the effect that Sir E. K. Chambers was really not very unkind to him. So much the

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, it is true, has courageously faced the stigma, "for self and partner." "Our method," he declares in his introduction to *THE SHREW*, "has been accused as 'disintegrating' Shakespeare. We retort that no method at this time of day can, on condition of its being scholarly, do anything else, if we use the word intelligently." But it would not be fair to take these spirited words as meaning all they may suggest. What Sir Arthur has in view, as he explains, is simply the propriety of giving proper consideration to the quarto texts as against the Folio—a thing understood to have been done by editors in some degree from Pope onwards. How unjust it would be to suspect Sir Arthur of going the length of disputing the Shakespearean authorship of even *THE SHREW* may be seen on reading his treatment of the problem as he sees it.

And Professor Wilson, who in turn parries the charge of disintegration in his British Academy lecture on "The Elizabethan Shakespeare," may well claim to have kept on the safe side of things. It is true that he swings rather extensively and rather strangely between the safe position (*a*) that to show

better, though he is visibly nervous about being associated with the present writer's heresy.

Still, a little gratitude for a friendly testimony to his real non-complicity would have been seemly. Unfortunately, when Mr. Wilson does attempt a "reply" he becomes alternately evasive and vituperative. "The first ten pages of your article," he bitterly observes (after intimating that a quarter of a century ago—when he expressed himself otherwise—he knew some of my "tricks"), "are entirely devoted to the process of kicking up a dust so as to conceal the weakness of your true position." The reader of this reprint is thus duly forewarned,

rehandling of a play is "not surely to injure it in any way as a work of art," and (b) the oddly exaggerating thesis that "it is doubtful whether any play of Shakespeare's was ever performed twice in his lifetime in exactly the same form," Shakespearean playbooks being "in a constant state of flux." But at the same time he is careful to come down fairly heavily on the side of one or other of the old conventional compromises, after some little hedging.

Disintegration, doubtless, could be charged on him, in the mandarin sense of the term, when, after a duly startling description of some of us as going over the plays with our microscopes and bringing to light "*countless* flaws of structure and character," he forensically avows that sometimes the Master "collaborated." "The latter explanation," he tells his possibly disturbed audience, "may pass muster in respect of plays like MEASURE FOR MEASURE OR ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL, which are almost certainly the result of *collaboration* between Shakespeare and some second-rate dramatist to whom was entrusted the *final* shaping of the material. But collaboration of this kind," he carefully adds, "is, I believe, *rare in Shakespeare*, and in any case it must be carefully distinguished from the far more frequent phenomenon of revision."

The indefensible definition here implicitly given of "collaboration" was, I am sure, mere laxity and not strategy on Professor Wilson's part. What he professes to distinguish from "revision" is just revision by the *other* "collaborator" so-called. That is mere

logomachy or "terminological inexactitude." Professor Wilson is presumably aware that the recent argument for the dual authorship of MEASURE FOR MEASURE and ALL'S WELL exhibits them as old plays rewritten by Chapman and *then* revised by Shakespeare. To say it is "almost certain" that there was a collaboration in the proper sense of the term (such as takes place when two or more authors together plan a play and divide it among them) is a completely unwarranted course, in these cases at least. No bibliographical evidence that Professor Wilson can adduce will justify it.¹

But even the mandarins must admit that my friend has taken serious trouble to reassure the orthodox public as far as possible when he says that "*collaboration of this kind* is, I believe, *rare* in Shakespeare." None of us will deny, I think, that it is very rare indeed, since we cannot be sure of it even in HENRY VIII and TIMON, the most likely-looking cases. It is one of the inveterate fallacies of the traditionists thus to assume collaboration when there is visible only differentiation of hands, which is really more likely to be successive than collaborative after Shakespeare's first period. And to this fallacy my friend boldly commits himself, without any show of new warrant, by way of assuring the troubled flock that, in point of fact, the Folio plays are almost always quite Shakespearean.

What he makes of TITUS, TIMON, PERICLES, HENRY

¹ This is one of the many points on which Mr. Wilson does not "reply."

V, the HENRY VI plays, HENRY VIII, RICHARD III, JULIUS CÆSAR, THE MERRY WIVES, and others, it is not for me to speculate about ; his vindication, as against the broad and general charge of being a " disintegrator," is to be found in his treatment of THE SHREW and in his Academy lecture. For, after all their defensive formulas, the two co-editors are practically if not completely agreed in holding that not only is the play as it stands written by Shakespeare, but the play commonly regarded as older, THE TAMING OF A SHREW, is a mere corruption of Shakespeare's draft. And as there are few plays in the Folio in which after TITUS the presence of other hands is more palpably revealed by a quite un-Shakespearean versification, the school of orthodoxy will be ungrateful indeed if they seek further to drive the Cambridge co-editors into the outer darkness of " disintegration." Has not Professor Wilson been diligently nailing new hoops on the decomposing barrel ? Such allies, surely, should not be so cruelly stigmatised.

There is indeed hardly an old device of traditionism that has not been loyally employed by one or other editor. Sir Arthur, for instance, alternately musters courage to avow that we can after all realise when, in the Folio, we are reading a non-Shakespearean scene, and recollects himself to shake his ferule at all critics who presumptuously profess to know why they so distinguish. And Professor Wilson has made the most pathetic sacrifices in what we may term the academic cause. He has twice endorsed the

desperate fallacy expounded by Mr. Peter Alexander, to the effect that certain scraps of matter in A SHREW prove it to have been a corruption of THE SHREW in its present form, when the only licit inference is that A SHREW is a curtailment or corruption of an older play which *in full* was in the possession of the draftsmen of THE SHREW. And in embracing the fallacy, in broad daylight, Professor Wilson has risen to a height of self-stultification that might almost be reckoned tragic. On page 122 he writes: "I have already recorded my agreement with Mr. Alexander's contention that A SHREW was based upon a memorised reconstruction of Shakespeare's play." On page 123, he writes: "Taken as a whole, A SHREW is so remote from the play as we know it, that it affords a very insecure foothold for speculation."¹

Greater adaptability hath no man than this, that he mutilates his critical body in order to make a concordat with the mandarins! For the rest, my friend achieves a new revelation of the potency of the spirit of idolatry. THE SHREW, in both forms, is so un-Shakespearean a play that readers so unlike as Fleay and Sidgwick repugn it. The versification even of some of the speeches over which my friend allows himself to claim pre-eminence for the young

¹ On this point, again, Mr. Wilson is scrupulously careful not to "reply." What he is concerned to say is: "all the verse-tests in the world will never convince me that Katharina's great [!] speech at the end of V, ii, is by anyone but William Shakespeare," with the further proclamation that "upon the character of early Shakespearian verse . . . my own views are, I fear, still to a large degree unformulated." Such are our editorial guides.

Shakespeare is so flagrantly un-Shakespearean, by the test of the DREAM, that we must count him out of the school which recognises differences in versification at all. And that perfectly fatal surrender to traditionism is evidently justified in the eyes of the surrenderer by the concept of reverent loyalty.

Shakespeare, he impressively tells us at the close of his editorial essay on "The Copy for the Text," was so early as 1592 "*already* capable of the verse we find, for instance, in Petruchio's speech at the end of 4.1 or Katharina's at the end of 5.2. Surely not a remarkable feat [!] for the greatest of all poets at the age of 27 to 30, and yet one that orthodox Shakespearean criticism will, unless we are mistaken, find it very difficult to credit."

To simulate¹ official *hari-kari* in the act of committing critical kow-tow for official ends is indeed a *beau geste*. But alas for the cause of the coalition! Shakespeare in 1592 could "*already*," as in the opening scene of the ERRORS, write a blank-verse which is as essentially superior to that of THE SHREW as Shakespeare is essentially superior to Marlowe in the art of versification. My friend is but acclaiming Marlowese as Shakespearean, in the act of proving that he, the critic, is after all more royalist than the King, more truly orthodox than the mandarins.

Truly, it would not be a "*remarkable feat*," though it would be a remarkable foolery, for Shakespeare to write the end-stopped blank-verse of the normal

¹ Mr. Wilson was justified in complaining that the printing of this word as "*stimulate*" made the passage unintelligible.

Marlowe when he could already write verse that transcends the line-ended norm. And it is only the unevicted spirit of idolatry that could make-believe to see in the production of still primitive line-ended verse, "at the age of 27 to 30," something more Shakespearean than orthodoxy can yet bring itself to conceive as possible. It is hard to say which is the more hopelessly idolatrous, the ostensible tempered enthusiasm of the new recruit or the indurated impercipient which he ascribes to his pastors and masters and the flock they shepherd.

For there is neither poetic nor ethical, neither technical nor dramatic eminence in either the play or the portions specified. If this is Shakespeare, "so much the less Shakespeare he." The very essence of idolatry is the reverence for the thing sacerdotally pedestalled as such, down to the feet of clay. It concretes itself as the mere haloing of bad or inferior art; and it paralyses us for the high purpose of realising wherein artistic superiority consists. The very service which Professor Wilson, for instance, has rendered by his acute bibliographical scrutinies, is now, by his will, capable of being enlisted in the traditional cause of the dogma of the Shakespearean authenticity of the Folio in the lump.

§ 3. *Disparagement versus Disintegration: Phaëton in Charge*

Yet idolatry must needs pose as the spirit of light. In his Academy lecture, accordingly, my friend

bravely sets out with a declaration that Shakespeare "wrote many pedestrian and even foolish lines"; and this festive concession will doubtless establish the many in the faith that such lines as:

Sir Richard Ketley, Davy Gam Esquire,
and
When I was mortal, my anointed body
By thee was punched full of deadly holes,
and

In a most hideous and dreadful manner,
are from the pen of the Master, and that all the puerility of action and diction in 3 HENRY VI is at worst a matter of his writing in his drink. Similarly my friend's gay endorsement of Ben Jonson's "Would that he had blotted a thousand"—penned apropos of a line that was certainly not foolish, save to the eye of a pedant—will serve to cover forcibly all the poor stuff that may obtrude itself in plays latterly arraigned as more or less ungenuine. To this pass does it come with traditionary reverence when it is put to its trumps. Idolatry zealously, nay, joyfully, degrades its own object. Rather than reason, it will blaspheme. It is now actually "safer" to denigrate Shakespeare than to disintegrate him.

It is "safe" as we see, for Mr. Wilson. By jovially professing to repudiate idolatry he makes things safe, as it were, for iconolatry, which is the same thing on a lower plane. It is safe, again, for Dr. Chambers to call Imogen a puppet, and to allege that ROMEO AND JULIET was motivated by Shakespeare's love affairs. And so with discrimination of style stages. Where

scientific criticism carefully notes that Shakespeare grows from a youthful to a mature and finally to an elderly style, each of which has the defects of its great qualities, the good mandarin zealously confuses stages with species. When it is noted that other men's faults are plainly visible in a composite play, he inanely alleges that the radical critics assume Shakespeare to be "always at his best," calls *them* idolatrous, and hugs himself in his iconolatry. When he cannot deny that a style in the Folio is non-Shakespearean, he claims that the Master was always "experimenting" in other men's styles. Thus it is "safe" to say that Shakespeare is the maniac-mimic humbly imitating every inferior style in sight—four styles in one play, for instance.

In these circumstances, the British Academy hospitably invites Professor Legouis to demonstrate that Shakespeare in his youth was probably a drunkard, and nobody is scandalised. The rebuke of the Academy (as formerly represented by Lord Bryce) is solely for suggestions of higher criticism so temperate and so guarded as were those of Professor Mackail in *his* Academy lecture. And the Academy is abundantly countenanced by the literary criticism which acclaimed the erotomaniac theory of Mr. Frank Harris. There appears to be no reason why that should not be once more "safely" expounded under the ægis of the Academy; though, to be sure, the vain tradition of Shakespeare's lawyership, founded by Marlone, is now being put out of fashion even among the lawyers.

Possibly, let us admit, a respected and scholarly judge might be invited by the Academy to expound the sane view, on that theme. And let us not forget that there have been some excellent Academy lectures on Shakespeare—the masterly discourse of Professor Bradley on *CORIOLANUS*, as well that of Professor Mackail, so discourteously rebuked by my political friend Lord Bryce, who had no scholarly or critical status whatever on a Shakespearean problem. But the main drift of Academic (with a capital A) criticism in Shakespearean matters appears now to have been stereotyped by Sir E. K. Chambers, even the gifted and ingenious Mr. Granville-Barker taking the bibliographical tradition for granted; and the present writer appears to have been violently raised to the evil eminence of an “Aunt Sally” for Academy lecturers at a loss for original ideas on the subject of Shakespeare.

As against the new school of bibliographical compromise it is quite useless to appeal to the test of style. Peele’s will for them pass as easily as Marlowe’s or Chapman’s, especially when you presuppose not merely experimental mimicry, but “collaboration” without any external or internal grounds for any inference save that of revision by Shakespeare. When you can believe that Shakespeare in 1592 wrote typical Marlowese line-ended verse with 28 per cent of double-endings and *thereafter* wrote *I HENRY IV* with the minimum percentage of 5.1, in a totally different blank-verse, you can believe anything whatever as to style within the ambit of the Folio.

So much, in *that* direction, can idolatry accomplish.

§ 4. *Professor Wilson's felo-de-se*

Let us then finally realise, in the concrete, to what a diet of idolatry and traditionism may bring a scholar who has actually done scholarly service to Shakespeare study.¹ Lest I should do my friend that easy disservice of misrepresentation into which he at times so lamentably falls, I will transcribe verbatim from his lecture (with some italics of my own, here as elsewhere), a passage to which he has most amicably called my attention. It expounds his view (p. 15) that "sometimes a blunder on the part of the producer will actually expose a bookman's fallacy," and his proposition, "I have come across at least one amusing instance of this." At a certain performance of HAMLET, the Academy lecturer then tells us, the play

' was cut, in places pretty drastically. One of the scenes thus sacrificed was that at the beginning of Act II in which Polonius dispatches his man Reynaldo to Paris with instructions to spy upon Laertes. It is not a complete scene, since, as you will recollect, Ophelia's account of Hamlet's invasion of her closet follows immediately; but it is readily excised, and its riddance saves seventy-two lines. Moreover, in making this cut the Birmingham players were well in line with the latest [!] findings of

¹ To this panegyric I feel bound to adhere, even when Mr. Wilson assures me that "scholars" will never listen to me, and—in a prose style which he claims to have modelled on Newman and several others—that his own views on the character of early-Shakespearean verse are, he fears, "still to a large degree unformulated." I infer that he means "unformed."

Shakespearean scholarship, inasmuch as Mr. J. M. Robertson has classed the episode among 'superfluous' and 'irrelevant scenes,' and declared that 'it clearly derives somehow from a pre-Shakespearean source.' Indeed, he continues, 'as our play now stands, the only conceivable motive for the Reynaldo scene is the theatrical need for comic relief after the tremendous Ghost scene' (*The Problem of Hamlet*, 1919, pp. 57.8). Yet by following Mr. Robertson, Sir Barry Jackson's producer succeeded quite unwittingly in confuting him and entirely vindicating Shakespeare. For omit the Reynaldo episode in the theatre and it is seen to be *absolutely vital to the whole structure of the play*. The effect at the Kingsway was that Hamlet *rushed straight* from the interview with his father's spirit to the interview with Ophelia; and her description of him,

Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors,

only confirmed the impression. Thus Hamlet's behaviour to Ophelia at this juncture was provided with an excuse for which there is no warrant in Shakespeare, *the two months' interval vanished into air, and the sense of delay was weakened* to such an extent that it was difficult to understand what Hamlet's self-reproaches concerning his procrastination were about. My friend Mr. Robertson will, I hope, forgive me for employing a slip on his part to illustrate the general thesis that we literary critics run great risks in passing judgments on Shakespeare which involve questions of theatrical values. I fear I have myself made many slips as bad or worse."

I trust I shall always gratefully welcome correction

of the "slips" which, as Mr. Wilson avows, we all make at times; but it is truly distressing to be called on for such an acknowledgment where my friend has only achieved a combination of "slips" of his own not easily to be paralleled in critical literature. I will first specify them.

(1) Mr. Wilson very inconsiderately accuses the Birmingham producer of having rashly followed my advice. Why thus compromise a respectable entrepreneur? Probably the producer had never heard of my critical existence. The excision of the Reynaldo scene-section is the *normal* practice of the theatre, and was so before I was born. Sometimes, indeed, producers have given a few lines from the section,¹ by way of preparing for Ophelia's entrance; but I at least never saw even the bulk of the section played. Yet Mr. Wilson, inexplicably ignorant of the normal procedure to which he appeals, is largely occupied in his lecture with praising "the theatre" for the priceless series of lights which, in his experience, it lends to the exploring critic, and this even in the teeth of the rather contrary testimony of Mr. Granville-Barker, who probably knows considerably more about that matter.

(2) All that, however, is but an historical "slip" as compared with Mr. Wilson's *felo-de-se* as critic. On an earlier page (p. 7), repelling Dr. Bridges' attack on OTHELLO on the score that the whole thing is "impossible" (in respect of the time-table?), my friend

¹ This, I believe, was the practice of Irving. Of course, the "Old Vic" would play everything.

retorts that we must not defer even to Professor Bradley on such a point, seeing that OTHELLO "is generally regarded on the stage as the most effective and technically the most perfect of all Shakespeare's tragedies." This appears to be (inadvertently) hard on the stage, after so many people have noted the serious "technical flaws"; but my friend for his own part is idolatrously sure that "the swiftness and brilliance of OTHELLO as a theatre-piece are, at least in part, brought about by those very *contradictions and deceptions* which would be rightly stamped as defects in a novel." And again (p. 9): "In the theatre . . . the play moves forward . . . and gives the audience *no opportunity of examining the coherence of events too curiously*." That is to say, the impercipient audience is the guarantee of dramatic merit. In short, as Mr. Wilson, citing Dr. Bradley's own remarks, tells Dr. Bridges, "no one 'either in the theatre or in a *casual* reading of the play' is likely to notice" either impossibilities or contradictions. So be it (it is all an old story) for the argument's sake.¹

But what now becomes of Mr. Wilson's contention as to the vital necessity of a clearly realised time-

¹Significantly, if evasively, Mr. Wilson in his "reply" makes no mention of the fact that he had flouted Dr. Bridges for not recognising that at the theatre the time-table does not count, before proceeding to claim for his own part that the recognition of it in HAMLET is vital. He is naturally engrossed in the fatal task of explaining that though the Reynaldo scene is *not* of any effect for time-table purposes, it at the same time somehow *is*. I humbly suggest that Mr. Wilson never learned such "tricks" from me.

table in HAMLET? He has told us in so many words that "we" are hopelessly upset *in the theatre* if we do not realise a two months' interval between the first act and the second! This, as it happens, is quite untrue. Nobody is thus upset. But how can my friend possibly argue that we all are, when he has just been insisting that in the theatre nobody is likely to notice such things at all? This is to be illogical "beyond permission"; my friend has simply committed critical suicide.

(3) And in what a cause! Not once has he sought to argue the vital critical issue raised as to the Reynaldo scene-section. That it is irrelevant to the main action is in simple fact the established view of "the theatre," to which he has just been according plenary authority. That the scene is *not by Shakespeare*; that it is not in his style, and that it is markedly in the style and like the matter of Chapman—these are the "disintegratory" propositions which he was almost in duty bound to rebut in the interest of the tradition; and he barely names them. The natural explanation of the inset—the stage need for a little light interlude¹—he quite vainly negates by stultifying at once the theatre, Shakespeare and himself. He stultifies the authoritative theatre by deriding its immemorial practice, not knowing what the practice was.² He stultifies Shakespeare by

¹ That Polonius in this and other scenes is a skit on Burleigh is an attractive hypothesis—but it need not be discussed here.

² Mr Wilson in his "reply" anxiously explains that *since 1897*, when he "first began going to Shakespearean performances, Forbes-Robertson inaugurated a healthier tradition" I am glad to read any praise of Sir Forbes-Robertson; but alas, when I

complimenting him on an excrescent scene-section which Shakespeare cannot have written; and he stultifies himself by standing *ad hoc* on a critical principle which he has previously declared to have no validity in regard to any play.

(4) And still the compound fracture produced by my friend's "slip" in the benevolent act of correcting an imaginary one is only in part diagnosed. He has been thus greatly daring on an assumption for which he has not a shadow of evidence. The Reynaldo scene-section, he tells us, is vital to the whole time-structure of this play (though time is wholly inoperative in *OTHELLO*), inasmuch as it indicates a necessary two months' interval. In point of fact it gives no indication of time whatever! Lærtes had started for Paris just before Hamlet had seen the Ghost. Polonius may be sending the spy after him within a week; we cannot tell from the dialogue. If Hamlet is guilty of a delay for which he later reproaches himself we cannot infer it at *this* point. It is in the *next* scene, after Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have had their talk with the King and Queen, that Polonius announces the return of the ambassadors whom the King had despatched to Norway¹ between

recently witnessed Mr. Ainley's Hamlet, the Reynaldo scene was, as of old, conspicuous only by its absence. And it was as to the intervening period that I had consulted playgoers, with the result of eliciting testimony which heavily confirmed my statement, and further discomfited Mr. Wilson.

¹ Whether this is a new employment of an episode which in the earlier play had another purpose is an issue too wide to be dealt with here. [To that original note I must regretfully append this: Mr. Wilson in his reply affirms that I "suspect the ambassadors and Fortinbras." Mr. Wilson simply has not the faintest idea of what the first note meant.]

the first and second appearances of the Ghost. That is our first time-mark.

How even that item spells the "two months' " *delay* (which we get from Ophelia in III, ii, 136—not from Hamlet in line 139) nobody has ever made clear. The journey from Elsinore to Christiania could be made in a few days. Hamlet certainly reproaches himself in a general way with delay, after seeing the players; but that is just the central crux of the play; for, apart from the journey of the ambassadors, there has been no measurable delay indicated, and the critical thesis which Mr. Wilson here evades is that Shakespeare, taking up and re-writing Kyd's already modified play, and not finding the simple explanation originally given there—that Hamlet was prevented from prompt action by the presence of the guards (now dropped from the play, in conformity to English court practice¹)—accepts a mysterious delay where none had been planned, and creates a new psychological situation.

Of course Mr. Wilson does not face such issues either as Academy lecturer or as editor, but he really has no right to pretend that the Reynaldo section specified a "vital" two months' delay, especially after insisting that on the stage such matters of time are of absolutely no account. "The two months'

¹ One critic, taking up this point at second-hand without examining the original thesis, has argued that, as the play directions show, guards existed *for some purposes*. That had been noted in the very passage upon a reference to which the critic proceeded. The point is that there were no guards *round the sovereign in presence* in the Elizabethan court.

interval," he now avers, "has by the dropping of that scene-section 'vanished into air'." Where then had it been indicated? The dropped Reynaldo section is *part* of a scene.¹ The remainder is left. Then if the dropped section gave the *time* interval, the next section does so equally—for all theatrical purposes, as set forth by Mr. Wilson.

And be it observed, this neck-or-nothing vindication of "Shakespeare," and of the vital function of time-indication where it is *not* to be found, while time matters nothing on the stage in general, comes from the critic who has elsewhere written that "Heminge and Condell clearly considered the playhouse transcript better copy than the fuller, *though less actable*, Shakespearean text which had got into print in 1605." Thus Heminge and Condell might steal the horse, while all subsequent producers must not look over the hedge. *La belle critique!*

§ 5. *Unlearned Learning*

It is almost an anti-climax to turn from this scene of critical suicide to the other reproaches, particular and general, which are cast by my friend at named and unnamed operators in the outer darkness. He no doubt felt he was distributing largess when he conceded that "*despite* the blind-eye which they turn towards the theatrical conditions of Shakespeare's art, the modern school of Shakespearean critical

¹ Mr. Wilson supposes himself to be "replying" when he advances this proposition as a new argument of his own.

analysis is doing work which carries us *some* way towards an understanding [not of tragic characters but] of the craftsmanship which went to the creation of these characters." This is presumably not addressed to my friend's co-editor, who has written a volume on *Shakespeare's Workmanship*, or to Mr. Allardyce Nicoll, though he too has discoursed on craftsmanship. If it is meant for those of us elsewhere called up for judgment, it would clearly avail nothing to plead that the present writer has supposed himself to be studying the said theatrical conditions through half a dozen volumes. He may have done it all with a blind eye! That then need not detain us. But it may be fitting to observe, in this connection, that Professor Stoll, to name no other, has by his scrutiny of the theatrical conditions in the composition of HAMLET conveyed to his readers in general a notion of the matter considerably more satisfying than any of the lights on that play now or formerly supplied by Mr. Wilson.

More concrete, however, is another reproach which, apparently on the same neck-or-nothing bent of loyalty to the tradition and the genius of the theatre, my friend casts at Professor Schücking, Professor Stoll, and my unworthy self, three specified sciolists who, he alleges (pp. 11-12):

"unite in fastening upon that old crux, Hamlet's reference to

The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns,

as an illustration of Shakespeare's carelessness, since,

they assert, such words are *absurd* on the lips of one who has himself interviewed the returned spirit of his own father. A *little* knowledge of Elizabethan ghost-lore," my friend pityingly proceeds, "would have shown them that the passage in question is simply an expression of *the contemporary Protestant refusal to believe* that apparitions *could* be the spirits of the departed, and that it falls in with the despondent mood of the 'to be or not to be' soliloquy as the most positive utterance of the doubt which haunts the student of Wittenberg until the end of the play-scene, and which he voices *plainly enough* in the preceding soliloquy when he surmises that 'the ghost that I have seen may be a devil'."

And yet even here, with all that affable condescension, how hard does my friend hit himself! That he really supposed all three offending critics to be devoid of even a little Elizabethan ghost-lore seems difficult to credit, after the points, and the very point he makes, had been expressly discussed by nearly every writer on the theme.¹ But the important thing is not the possible extent of the fabulous ignorance of the three critical culprits: it is the strange pertinacity with which my friend not merely destroys his own case but reduces all criticism to chaos. It seems necessary once more to point out things seriatim.

(1) Everybody, despite Mr. Wilson's painful doubts, necessarily knew that Hamlet himself had raised the question of the possibility of a *false* spirit misleading him. The idea was mooted even in the old play.²

¹ *e.g.*, Dowden's note on it, citing Coleridge, who cited Browne.

² This reminder Mr. Wilson is rigidly careful to ignore. He thinks fit, however, to write: "As you are *now forced to admit*,

(2) All the same, everybody knew that *the audience*, even in Shakespeare's day, had no doubt that the Ghost was speaking truth.¹

(3) Hamlet's soliloquised doubt, accordingly, has been by some cited as a proof of his deplorable tendency to shirk the assassination of an uncle.

(4) Mr. Wilson's explicit assertion that contemporary Protestants in general "refused to believe that apparitions could be spirits of the departed" is a still vaster absurdity than his ostensible belief that the three critics arraigned by him knew nothing of any debate on the subject.

(5) For the very subsistence of the play turns on the fact that, whatever some theologians might say, and whatever Hamlet might hint, everybody in general believed in the Ghost *when they saw and heard it*, as we æsthetically do still. If they had not so believed to begin with, the play would be an unmanageable farce.

(6) As Mr. Wilson so laboriously explains, all spectators forget that there are several accounts of Hamlet's age when they see an actor who can be only of one age (sometimes visibly fifty). By parity of

Hamlet in retrospect had real doubts." Some tricks, surely, are not worth playing!

¹ Mr. Wilson, determined to hold on to *something* in his lecture, and to make good his dictum that all of us on whom he bestowed his scholarly derision were without even a smattering of knowledge as to what he calls "Elizabethan spiritualism," insists in his rejoinder that "the point . . . here is Hamlet's attitude, and not that of the spectators." This from the oracle who waves an antagonist aside as never looking at a play from the standpoint of "the theatre"! Mr. Wilson now carries incoherence to lengths rarely reached in academic circles.

reasoning, then, every willing spectator and auditor of the Ghost in HAMLET believed in him without question. Theologians did not frequent the theatre.

(7) When, then, Mr. Wilson tells us that "contemporary Protestantism" refused to believe that a ghost *could* be a real departed spirit he is making nonsense not only of the play but of all his own supererogatory assurances about "the theatre."¹

(8) The real objective, accordingly, of some if not of all modern questionings about the cited lines in the "to be" soliloquy is not, as Mr. Wilson so strangely suggests, to charge "absurdity," but to raise the question whether that soliloquy did not get misplaced in the chronic re-arrangement of Elizabethan plays which even Mr. Wilson admits to have taken place. The fact that he says nothing whatever about this, the real critical issue, must be viewed in the same light with the fact that he professedly supposes the other side in general to know absolutely nothing of the old debate about ghosts. That is to say, the matter must be left to him to explain, in terms of "the form of plausible manners."

(9) The question of the original placing of the "to be" soliloquy is obviously not to be argued ade-

¹ Mr Wilson, in his "reply," becomes positively distressing in his anxiety to claim that, before he edited the reprint of the translation of Lavater on Ghosts, none of us whom he indicted as ignoramuses could have known what he was driving at. He really does himself some injustice. Though he was unaware of the fact, the debate was really an old one, and he had made his intellectual confusion quite as clear as his ignorance of all previous statements of his own position.

quately in the present connection.¹ But it seems necessary (if the reader is to be made aware of Mr. Wilson's methods) to explain that, in the published view of the present writer, the soliloquy originally stood, and was meant to stand, in the first Act, in the neighbourhood of Hamlet's melancholy soliloquy there; but, being ousted by the cognate soliloquy, "O that this too too solid flesh would melt," it was incongruously preserved where it now stands, as a piece of grave declamation too popular to be dropped.

§ 6. *Blunders of the Newer Orthodoxy*

So much by way of indication of the aims and methods of the scientific scrutiny of Shakespeare which Professor Wilson is now piously antagonising in the interests of tradition, even while he continues to propose minor modifications of tradition. To discuss in detail the whole lecture, with its incoherent vindication of a theatrical illumination which is called in question by the argument itself, and its general impeachment of criticism that is in any degree anti-theatrical, would be to traverse a wide ground; and Dr. Bridges, in so far as he is assailed, can well take care of himself. But one cannot close the survey without noting the strange critical misrepresentation of Charles Lamb by which a "score for the theatre" is supposed to be effected. Mr. Wilson writes con-

¹ In his "reply" Mr. Wilson writes: "How any one, with a grain of dramatic sense, could propose to alter the position of that soliloquy, passes my æsthetic comprehension." Thus, I infer, Mr. Wilson regards as argument. The reader will pardon the absence of comment here.

cerning LEAR: "Here is a *tragedy* labelled by the literary critics from Charles Lamb onwards as *too vague and too terrible for the stage*. . . ."¹ I will not seek to interpose between Mr. Wilson and Mr. Granville-Barker beyond observing that the former has heedlessly followed the sketchy statement of the latter (in his Academy lecture), where Lamb is at one point misrepresented, and at another quite uncritically dismissed, without being named. But many students might well reproach me if I did not point out that Lamb said no such thing as is by Mr. Wilson put in his mouth; and that those who have concurred with him are equally misrepresented.²

What Lamb says in his great essay is that "the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted"—the *dramatis persona* in the storm, that is to say, not "the play"; and again: "Lear [*i.e.* the mad Lear in the storm] is essentially impossible to be represented on the stage." And one who has actually seen, in youth, the mighty Salvini, organ-voiced, magnificently begin to represent him, and later inevitably fail to cope with the terrific contest of soliloquy and storm, can

¹ It is, perhaps, needless to mention that in his "reply" Mr. Wilson makes no attempt to vindicate or explain these and the other critical perversions hereinafter noted.

² My friend Mr. Allardyce Nicoll, in his laudable *Studies in Shakespeare*, commits the same error, possibly on the same cue, saying of the general structure of *Lear* (p. 137) that "*this particular feature* has been summed up by Charles Lamb in his famous pronouncement that *the tragedy* can never be acted." The besetting sin of our newer critics seems to be weakness in "thetic" construction, or formulation. But, after all, deficient *thinking* is an old story. What we might hope for is that censors should read the matter they censure.

claim to know that Lamb is right. I cannot suppose that Mr. Granville-Barker witnessed Salvini's ordeal, or that, say what he will (*ore rotundo*) about a triumph of "stage-craft," he has ever seen a greater tragedian succeed where Salvini could not.

Lamb knew the theatre, in his day and in his way, at least as critically as even Mr. Granville-Barker can; and he wrote of what he knew. He said nothing whatever about the *tragedy* being "too *vague* and too *terrible* for the stage"; and the pretence that he did so is, to say the least, unseemly. I do not like to cast such an epithet at my friend, but he invites it, here and elsewhere. He has either totally failed to understand Lamb or he scruples at nothing in his attempt at a concordat with "the theatre" against the criticism which, really studying the Elizabethan theatre more closely and dispassionately than he does, refuses to subject critical method to any theatrical convention or veto. It is mainly Shakespeare, the man of the theatre, as some of us insisted long before Mr. Wilson, who has made the English drama a permanently great literary phenomenon. But it was not the theatre that taught Lamb that, or taught us.

The same deficiency of study is revealed in Mr. Wilson's pronouncement that Arnold's line:

Others abide our question; thou art free!

"is no longer true." My friend has not tried to understand Arnold; he and the poet are thinking of different things—unless indeed my friend really

believed that his bibliographical and pseudo-theatrical arguments are on the way to making Shakespeare "yield up to our scrutiny *the very heart of his mystery*" (p. 10). One would fain suppose that this is but professional rhetoric, and that the student has still some adumbration of the elusiveness of Shakespeare's spirit, perceptible, in a lucid moment, to Emerson. But there is no saying. It may be, alack, that we shall get back to the concordat between the spirit of Shakespeare and the spirit of Garrick.

Let my friend, then, make the most of the series of illuminations he claims to have derived (p. 17) from his memories of amateur productions and other theatrical experiences. To these, he poetically declares, he clings as a shipwrecked sailor to a raft. One cannot well deprecate the figure of the shipwrecked sailor; but one must confess to have failed to discover the raft. All that is clearly visible is a bemused explorer swinging rather blindly between two idolatries, of which it would be comforting to be able to write, by way of epitaph:

One dead, the other powerless to be born.

No, that cannot be said. Both idolatries subsist, and will long subsist. But surely critical woe is in store for their votaries.

Such, at least, is the quasi-optimistic theorem provisionally maintained by those of us who hold that there is a conceivably attainable critical truth, a historical truth, even as there is a conceivably attain-

able scientific truth, commonly so called. It is, indeed, a piquant paradox that one should claim or hope to dispel illusion about the supreme Master of Illusion. But the paradox is genuine. Æsthetic illusion, a thing as such esteemed, is matter of æsthetic science ; and the scrutiny of biographical or bibliographical illusion, a thing disesteemed, is matter of historic science. Cases in both orders of illusion are here impugned, on the assumption that the law of right reason is the same for all professedly rational construction. And the open-minded onlooker may perhaps usefully whet his curiosity, to begin with, on a challenged historical hallucination " gross as a mountain, open, palpable " ; an æsthetic paralogism, conjoined with that ; a further series of bibliographical perversions ; and an outrageous critical paralogism consisting in the delivery of a flat self-contradiction. To all these my friend the Academy lecturer has pugnaciously committed himself ; and on being urgently invited, nay, challenged, to vindicate the main positions here assaulted, he has returned only subjective dicta of a singular irrelevance. Hence these animadversions.

Postscript

Professor Dover Wilson, in his article in *The Criterion*, had made so faint a semblance of vindicating his original charges, while devoting much space to new vituperation, that I have not thought it worth while to answer him at the length of an article.

A frank admission of his discreditable and undeniable errors would have averted even the need for republishing the above rebuttal; but, that not being forthcoming, I am constrained to touch upon only a few protuberances of his "Reply."

1. He appears, in his opening remarks ("You taunt me out of silence") to have regarded himself as harshly driven to making a rejoinder. As a matter of fact, he had met a first private remonstrance over his main miscarriages with the doughty declaration that he would fight on this theme till his "eyelids would no longer wag."

2. Apparently one of the strongest of his sentiments, which have moved him to a weird peroration, is the conviction that a public-spirited man would not mind being "guyed" to make a Burlington House holiday. And perhaps there is something to be said for that view, though, when all is said, blundering ridicule is not quite the finest sport for ladies, some of whom, after all, might even be disintegrators.

But, granting that I fell short of pure public spirit, how, on his own principles, can Professor Wilson demur when he is "guyed" in return for his preposterous blunders, such as his self-stultification (still unconfessed) on the theory of a time-table in stage action, and his revelation that he did not know the practice of the very theatre which he was invoking as light-giver? Can he not conceive that there may be fun for other people in noting the absurdities of an Academy lecturer amiably bent on

making other people appear ignorant and ridiculous? Shall there be no cakes and ale save at Burlington House?

3. What is perhaps worse than even his total failure to vindicate himself is his attempt to focus the discussion on his revival of the old thesis that Hamlet's "from whose bourn no traveller returns" was *designed* by Shakespeare to stand where it does, and does not indicate any fortuitous displacement of the soliloquy. It is bad enough that he should pretend to suppose all of us to have been ignorant of Elizabethan scepticism on ghosts till he edited the reprint of the translation of Lavater, when the question had been mooted times without number, and when, all the while, Hamlet's *own* play of doubt faces us in the drama. It is still worse—it is indeed stupefying—that he should now resort to the gross stratagem of writing: "As you are now *forced to admit*, Hamlet on retrospect had *real doubts*. . . ." But it is a really unexampled critical fiasco, on the part of a pundit casting censure on all sides, to affirm, by the plainest implication, that Hamlet at the point in question had reached *absolute disbelief* in the genuineness of the Ghost and the revelation that he had seen and heard.

The writer who maintains this irrational position informs me that he can find in all my books "not the slightest reverence or understanding" of Shakespeare as a dramatic artist. To that shouted impeachment I should not have thought it worth while to reply in any case. But when it comes from a critic

who propounds the view that Shakespeare conceived Hamlet as reaching an absolute disbelief between the planning and the acting of the play-scene, the charge becomes newly memorable.

Had Professor Wilson resorted to any of the old devices to explain away the "traveller" phrase—such as Theobald's, that the Ghost had come only from Purgatory, not from the "bourne"; or Malone's, that "traveller" meant "traveller retaining his corporeal powers"; or Schlegel's, that Shakespeare meant us to regard Hamlet as incapable of holding to any conviction; or Coleridge's, that "returns" meant "returns to stay"—one might have paused to argue the plea, noting how normally apriorism blocks the way to induction. But the Professor, having latterly learned that some Elizabethans, with Lavater, rejected all ghost testimonies, and being spontaneously convinced that no critic before him was aware of this, comes to the conclusion that the dramatist meant us to regard Hamlet as having been suddenly converted with (or by!) Lavater to *absolute disbelief*, yet as proceeding with his purpose of detection on the strength of the very belief which the Ghost had conveyed to him!

That conception of Shakespeare's mental processes may be left to the reader's verdict. It is a critical self-stultification on a level with the self-contradiction as to whether time counts for anything on the stage, in the action of a play.

4. After these edifying manoeuvres Professor Wilson liberates his soul in a furious final *barrage*.

In that, he sees fit to represent me as arguing that "TITUS ANDRONICUS is too *bloody* and THE TAMING OF THE SHREW too *illiberal* to be admitted to the Canon." I trust that the studious reader will note how much the Professor has understood, or read, of the technical arguments of THE CANON. I confess I had not hitherto realised how incompetent a Folio-later may be to understand what he reads. Such, let it be realised once for all, is the measure of attention and intelligence brought to bear on the matter by a British Academy lecturer.

5. It were perhaps more humane to say nothing of the concluding convulsion of strenuous sarcasm, in which "my friend" predicts that as a result of my efforts Shakespeare will be finally revealed as "of Scotch origin," and a modern rationalist and radical. But it is really to make occasion to avow a sense of the pitifulness of it all that I make mention of that lamentable wind-up, considered as a reply to a detailed indictment. Are *these* the shifts to which academic orthodoxy is reduced?

By force of assurances given to me by others, I have been led to think that there survives, and operates, an opinion on the part of some academic persons that a non-academic person is barred by the proprieties from any save a humble remonstrance in the case of his being critically scourged by one of the former. Quite a number of instances bear out the inference; and it seems just possible that *there* lies part of the explanation of a number of phenomena

such as that above examined. It may further be the explanation of a recent account given by Dr. G. B. Harrison, in the *London Mercury*, of the procedure in the last-issued volume of THE SHAKESPEARE CANON as one of bestowing churlish "kicks" upon the Shakespearean critics there dealt with.

As the critical procedure in question was at every point one of argumentation, sometimes applause, with no "personalities" of any kind (save in the repelling of one aspersive perversion) it would appear that Mr. Harrison cannot regard such criticism of university professors and lecturers as permissible to an outsider. He himself, in the course of the same article, is at pains to disparage the late Sir Sidney Lee as an "intolerably prosy" writer of a "three pile plush style"—this of a biographer who never made any pretension to be a stylist, from a critic who surely *can* make none.

I trust I have never employed such methods or such language in a serious critical debate; and if argued animadversions be "Kicks," it must be hard to find a fit term for these. For his own part, Dr. Harrison dismisses as "personal conclusions," and as "intuitions," processes of objective analysis and testation which have been found by some readers tediously scientific, he being apparently impercipient of all literary evidence save that which is biographical. There is accordingly no occasion for argument with such a judge. But he seems worth mention as illustrating that curious "superiority complex" in academic persons, above glanced at,

which is supposed to relieve them of any obligation to argue where they condemn.

It is, however, fair to add that, besides deriding Lee, Dr. Harrison disposes by the one phrase of "the Saccharine School of Dowden," an academic of some distinction. The solution may be that he is anxious to monopolise the "Kick Churlish," in the lack of other critical resources.

For Dr. Harrison had in this case, I admit, a personal motive. At a small gathering of the Shakespeare Association he once maintained the familiar thesis that Sonnet 107 is to be dated, not 1603, but 1596, in respect of 1596 being Elizabeth's "climacteric" year. That would account, he argued, for the line: "The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured." Being simply asked, "How could you call a climacteric an eclipse?" he had no answer ready. Hence, I suppose, his sentiment about arguments as being "Kicks." But *de minimis*—the maxim is somewhat musty.

CHAPTER II

THE FEARS AND HOPES OF PROFESSOR LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

§ I. *What Seems to be Feared*

“FEARS” may perhaps seem to some a strained inference from a total perusal of “A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting,” as Professor Lascelles Abercrombie has entitled his Shakespeare Lecture for the British Academy in the year 1930. What, it may be asked, can he be supposed to fear? The answer is that when a Professor frames a thesis that will not bear any formal scrutiny it is the decent academic custom to make his proposition “mean sense,” in so far as that is possible. And our primary position is that when Professor Abercrombie put his “Plea for Liberty” he must be held to have apprehended some present or future danger to his freedom.

Obviously it cannot have been that the British Academy would issue any edict of repression. The free hand given in past years to every variety of “interpretation,” save the kind that he would ban, must have reassured him on that score. Nor can he have feared that after his liberal panegyric of “the keen and rigorous criticism of Professor Pollard . . .

and, more recently still, of Mr. Alexander," any aggressive attempt would be made from that quarter to interfere with a liberty of interpretation which proceeds on the following pronouncement (the syntax is ultra-liberal, but the reader can divine the drift) :

" Mr. Alexander's argument makes it irresistible, that the simplest and completest account of the whole situation in respect of HENRY VI is to accept Shakespeare as the author of the Folio trilogy."¹

True, it was rash to assume that Dr. Greg, whose name is panegyrically inserted between those of Professor Pollard and Mr. Alexander, would make no trouble. Indeed it was risky to assume that Professor Pollard would make none, seeing that *he*

¹ Lecture cited, p. 14. It should be noted that this impressive endorsement implies acceptance of Mr. Alexander's memorable announcement that when Greene in the *Groatworth of Wit*, referring to " Shake-Scene," speaks of " his *Tyger's hart wrapt in a player's hide*," he means " his line of those words," which, by implication, Greene is deriding as Shake-scene's *bombast*. The reader, of course, at once recalls that there is no play-line with " player's hide " in it, but that we have " woman's hide " in 3 *H.* 6, I, iv, 137. Then Greene cannot have meant what Mr. Alexander says : if he had, he must of necessity have given the line as it stood. But Mr. Alexander and the late Dr. Smart, noting that Sergeant Buzfuz, impeaching Mr. Pickwick, spoke of " his heartless tomato sauce and warming pans," were sure that " his " is the key. Seeing that Buzfuz *did* quote Mr. Pickwick's words, and Greene makes a line of his own, the case is one of a mare's nest. Greene, who had written hundreds of lines of much worse bombast, could not have dreamt of indicting any line on that score. He simply used a tag which, by substituting " player's " for " woman's," he could turn to his purpose of invective. It is to be observed that the scholars who broadcast this absurd " interpretation " are academic lecturers on literature. It is hard to believe, however, that Dr. Smart would have committed the absurdity to print.

has, in his uncannily candid fashion, avowed that he does not at all hold the creed of his accomplices as to the impossibility of Heminge and Condell inserting in the Folio anything that they knew to be non-Shakespearean. The explanation here, of course, is that Professor Abercrombie did not know what Professor Pollard had so explicitly said, having either not read it or failed to understand it. An academic of the Alexandrian school of opinion who had heard Professor Abercrombie's lecture, being asked how much he thought the lecturer knew about his subject, cruelly answered, "Nothing."

It was in that state of critical preparation, then, that the Professor felt his liberty was in no danger from the subjects of his panegyric. But it is the more necessary to infer that he saw danger in *some* direction. Let us inquire, then, what is that form of liberty of interpretation for which he has framed his "plea." As he informs us at his outset (p. 4), the plea is for "a *return* to that liberty of interpreting which *must* follow when Shakespeare is considered primarily as an artist." This statement he repeats near his close (p. 29): "Liberty of interpretation must *necessarily* be granted if Shakespeare's plays are regarded as works of art."

How then, it may be asked, can the Professor be supposed to be under any apprehension? Well, the question must first be met by another: What need can he have felt for beseeching a liberty of interpretation that must necessarily be granted? Writing ostensible nonsense, he cannot have supposed that

in this free country there is going to be any prohibition laid on that. Certainly not; but that is just why we must suppose him to be thinking of something intelligible.

The liberty of interpretation that he has actually taken is large. He has found, he tells us, an "acute and much-to-be admired" critic arguing "to the effect that the humane and enlightened Virgil had, by drawing the character of Dido, marked a stage in the emancipation of women." That suggestion Professor Abercrombie liberally "interprets" thus (p. 20): "Our critic was an enthusiast for female enfranchisement; and he could not encounter a splendid and adorable woman *anywhere* without thinking, 'She ought to have the vote!'" When a Professor is free to interpret "acute and much-to-be admired" critics in that festive fashion in a British Academy lecture, what restraints on the liberty of interpretation of Shakespeare *can* he have dreaded?

The first answer would seem to be that, in British Academy lectures, to begin with, he desires to be protected from destructive criticism of his own peculiar ratiocination. And here, perhaps, though this is not his chief ground of apprehension, he is not without reason for his dread. Professor Wilson, for instance, felt himself happily at liberty to accuse half a dozen critics of crass ignorance on matters supposed to be within the ambit of all Shakespearean critics, revealing in his procedure a series of distressing ignorances of his own. So far, so good. The impeached critics had not been Academy lecturers.

But now Professor Abercrombie, without rashly following Professor Wilson's course of giving names, impeaches Professor Wilson, his predecessor in the "Annual" Chair. And in this case he must have known what he was doing. It is all very well to jeer (p. 15) at those critics who, in respect of certain Folio scenes, "from dislike . . . proceed to rejection." In delivering that shaft, Professor Abercrombie is not to be supposed to be aware that the critical course in question had avowedly been taken by Professor Pollard in regard to the scene of the degradation of Joan of Arc in 1 HENRY VI. But when our lecturer writes (p. 27) that "Those critics who exhort us never to forget that Shakespeare's work belongs to the theatre, are apt to forget that Shakespeare's public had no scruples at all about taking his plays as reading-matter," he must have been thinking about Professor Dover Wilson.

There is, then, a certain risk that the next Academy lecturer may obscurely allude to Professor Abercrombie as being "apt to forget" what he does not know, or even (like Professor Wilson) to forget in the second part of his lecture what he dogmatically alleged in the first. And in view of that possibility it is fitting here to remind the apostolic succession of lecturers who may henceforth defend the Folio faith that they really should try to keep step. Let them remember the statesmanlike saying: "It doesn't matter much what we say, but we must say the same thing"—up to a point, at least.

Still, it is not to be pretended that what Professor

Abercrombie was deprecating was the mere danger of a *riposte* in the next Academy lecture. After all, "hawks winna pike out hawks' een," even if they reciprocally pluck an occasional feather. It must have been a higher liberty that Professor Abercrombie was pleading for, a graver danger that he was hoping to avert. The liberty, in short, of affirming in one and the same discourse that A is B and that A is not B; the danger of a demand, in the name of rational criticism, that whatever nonsense a man is free to talk, he shall be held up even to academic question when, as aforesaid, he deliberately takes his stand upon a very definite dogma and then proceeds to destroy his own position and definition.

Of course the judicious reader may here argue that Professor Abercrombie cannot be supposed to know that he thus put himself "in danger" of the law of logic. The point is certainly arguable. But at least it is incumbent on us to set forth the facts. And the friendliest of judicious readers may be challenged to deny that the following is an accurate summary of Professor Abercrombie's critical positions.

§ 2. *Shakespeare's "Responsibilities"*

1. The "Plea for Liberty of Interpreting" consists, broadly speaking, of two theses. The first is to the effect that there can be no æsthetic criticism of Shakespeare whatever unless we hold him "responsible" for the whole Folio whether he wrote it all or not. But before reaching the thesis of "responsibility" the Professor has ostensibly taken up the

position that Shakespeare *did* write the whole HENRY VI trilogy, because Mr. Peter Alexander has "irresistibly" shown that to be the "simplest and completest" way of settling things. Later, he does not seem to be so sure that Mr. Alexander has an equally simple and complete way of disposing of PERICLES and some other plays. There he falls back on "responsibility."

2. Incidentally it may be remarked that the Professor's term is either a *brutum fulmen* or an assumption that Shakespeare is "responsible" for the *publication* of all the plays assigned to him. And as the Professor expressly argues (pp. 6, 21) that we must not pretend to be able to divine a poet's intentions even in the plays he writes, as distinguished from the effects produced, we are moved to ask how on earth he can pretend to know anything whatever about Shakespeare's desires or plans in the matter of publication? Quartos and Folio alike defy the pretence. Apart from the VENUS and the LUCRECE we have absolutely no rational ground for inferring that Shakespeare ever wanted anything published as his.

Perhaps even Professor Abercrombie, if it occurred to him to make a logical reflection, would admit that the publication of three editions of TITUS ANDRONICUS, in Shakespeare's lifetime, with no author's name whatever, is *not* a presentable ground for the hypothesis that Shakespeare would have liked to publish that play as his. Even the "diehard" intelligence appears to entertain here—not, of course,

a critical misgiving, but—a suspicion of a deficiency of evidence, as to which the less said the better. But the issue of other Quartos without, and of some with, Shakespeare's name or initials, is equally incapable of yielding the proof that Shakespeare claimed to have written the plays in question, and desired to have them regarded as his works. The only plausible surmises are :

(a) that the theatre company, when a consenting party, gave consent as a matter of company business ; and

(b) that Shakespeare merely made no effective demur, regarding the matter as the company's affair.

As to the Folio, finally, either the pretence or the assumption that Shakespeare would have approved of that, as it stands, would be a truly egregious position on the part of an " interpreter " who insists that we must *not* pretend to know an artist's " intentions " even from his undisputed work. But that Professor Abercrombie is capable of that assumption is so far from being here denied that it must be indicated as his subsumption all along.

We are left, then, with four forms of *brutum fulmen* at this point. As thus :

(a) If Shakespeare so much as revised or regularised the versification of TITUS or 1 HENRY VI he is " responsible " for it all as *his* work, whether or not he wanted to have it published as his.

(β) If, as analytical æsthetic criticism infers, he wrote certain speeches in 2 HENRY VI and RICHARD III,

he is "responsible" for the whole, whether or not he desired the publication.

(γ) If he made no demur to the imposition of his name by the company on certain quartos in which he had merely effected some adaptation, all that "æsthetic criticism" can undertake to do is to discuss the effects obtained, literary or dramatic, raising no other issue.

(δ) Corollary! Æsthetic criticism, therefore, has nothing to do with the question of alien matter in either the Folio or the Sonnets, whether or not the latter collection, issued without his permission, includes sonnets which are not of his writing, or the former included plays the "responsibility" for which he would have denied.

This interesting position we reach in terms of Professor Abercrombie's explicit affirmations as well as of his explicit account of the nature and limitations of æsthetic criticism.

3. We now come to the Professor's exposition of what "æsthetic criticism" is, and what it is not. "If it be true," he writes, "that Shakespeare was *only responsible* for part of the work which goes under his name, then æsthetic criticism becomes, properly speaking [!], impossible." As our dialectician later insists that an artist *must* be held responsible for the whole of a work to which he has done anything, it might be supposed here that he is only laying down that eristic doctrine. But he goes further, expressly denying that it is possible to make

any discrimination whatever between literary styles in any composite work of art :

There is no *real* evidence on which the question *can* be decided. There are *prejudices, preferences*, analyses, comparisons, statistics, verse-tests, word-counts, *sense of style, poetical feelings*, intuitions—but we must not call all this evidence, unless we add the compromising [!] epithet “internal.” *And internal evidence, by its very nature, has only subjective weight : it puts no obligation on any one but the person who brings it forward.*

4. We turn, then, as in duty bound, to what the Professor offers us as his æsthetic criticism, only to discover—I will not say, with astonishment, for that is really not the sensation—that it consists simply in telling us how *he* feels about a work of art, or any piece of it. “His [happily] not to reason why.” He is simply what used to be called an impressionist ; and æsthetic criticism for him consists in announcing such things as that, for him, in PERICLES the phrase “music of the spheres” is “a sublime stroke” ; that Prince Hal is rightly and devoutly to be regarded as “the kind of person who can touch pitch without being defiled” ; that Isabella exhibits a “splendid and terrible Puritanism” ; that much of what Shakespeare *took over* [observe the avowal] in PERICLES is “wretched stuff,” but that Shakespeare is of course “responsible” for it.

5. Thus it appears (1) that, after denying that æsthetic criticism can make any discrimination whatever between hands or styles in a given play, Professor Abercrombie expressly alleges (1) that it *can* ;

and (2) that after denying all validity to discrimination of hands or styles in a play, since that means relying on subjective impressions, *he has actually no other conception of æsthetic criticism than that it is his purely subjective impression, which he ought to be at liberty to proclaim.*

As he puts it, a work of art "exists only as it is experienced," and every experience is individual, an audience thus creating as many experienced works of art as it has persons experiencing. "Poetical feelings" and "preferences" and "sense of style" he has dismissed as "not evidence" for anything about authorship. They are only evidence that they exist as such. But, so far as Professor Abercrombie can manage it, there is to be no "liberty of interpreting" a passage as non-Shakespearean—except when Professor Abercrombie, as in *PERICLES*, takes that liberty, with the saving caveat that it does not matter, since Shakespeare is responsible for all the "wretched stuff" he "took over."

Liberty of interpretation, then, is to be liberty for the Professor to proclaim *his* preferences, how in general *he* feels about things literary; and, further to dismiss as "subjective" other people's discriminations of styles; the residual thesis being that the Professor's own subjective impressions constitute that substance of æsthetic criticism which should, and *must*, be alone accorded liberty of utterance.

In sum, we have these positions: -

A. Impressions as to differences of style and versification between Shakespeare and Marlowe are

valueless, being entirely arbitrary, prejudiced, subjective and unverifiable.

B. "Æsthetic criticism" is "impossible" if such differences are admitted to exist in the plays.

C. Æsthetic criticism consists in saying, firstly, that they cannot be cognised; secondly, that they can; and thirdly that, all the same, the sole licit business in hand is to dismiss all such opinions as subjective, and then to expound other avowedly subjective opinions which happen to be held by Professor Abercrombie.

§ 3. *The Concept of Æsthetic Criticism*

Two critical propositions would now seem to be in order. Professor Abercrombie's plea for liberty of interpretation, as we have seen, is a plea for untrammelled freedom of incoherence and self-stultification. On this head, then, he can be cordially assured that there is no risk of anything being done to silence him. Nor, indeed, would any thoughtful critic desire to. For what better way is there of bringing vacuous doctrine into discredit than to let it betray itself *ad libitum*? But if, in defiance of the Professor's own dictum that we can never know an artist's intentions (save when *he* sees fit to be sure that he can), we proceed to interpret the Professor's literary strategy, we seem driven to divine that he regards as destructive of *his* liberty the liberty taken by other persons who profess to be æsthetic critics.

And here, it is to be feared, his apprehensions cannot be soothed. Granting that he may be held

likely to "write himself down," it seems really desirable, in the interests of popular education, that his critical and other difficulties should be set forth. For here is a Professor of English Literature who avowedly recognises no verifiable differences of style or versification in the plays of the Folio, though he somehow sees some in *PERICLES*, and even in *HENRY VIII*. And the question arises, What are chairs of literature for? We might even ask, What are British Academy Shakespeare lectures for? and get the answer of Professor Dover Wilson that they are just afternoon entertainments at Burlington House—a proposition not easily to be accepted by those who remember the lectures of Dr. Bradley, Dean Beeching, Professor Mackail and Dr. Greg.

But at least the teaching of English literature to students would seem to be of small value if it is merely a lead to the utterance of expressions of rapture or disapprobation over what they read.¹ If it is designedly to leave them unaware of inexplicable differences of style and versification in a number of Folio plays, it appears to be a rather vain expenditure of public money. And if it is to leave them wholly unable to give a rational answer to the question how Shakespeare came to write pure Marlowese at the outset of *I HENRY VI*; pure early Shakespeare in the first scene of the *ERRORS* and Marlowese in the second; pure Marlowese in Juliet's

¹ This was once austere flouted by an eminent Shakespearean scholar as "signpost criticism." Still, there is something to be said for it—when practised with intelligence.

epithalamium, and pure Shakespeare in the love speeches and court speeches of Portia, the undergraduate, once emancipated from the academic gymnastic of impressionism, might conceivably come to the conclusion that his time had been badly wasted.

He would have received at the hand of Professor Abercrombie the assurance that Suffolk's speech :

Great men oft die by vile bezonians :
A Roman sworder and banditto slave
Murder'd sweet Tully : Brutus' bastard hand
Stabb'd Julius Cæsar ; savage islanders
Pompey the great ; and Suffolk dies by pirates,

" is the very *quintessence* of the culture and ethic of the time's aristocracy "—that being licit " æsthetic criticism." If then he should be told by another that this is ignorant nonsense ; that neither Sidney nor Essex, neither Leicester nor Raleigh, neither Burleigh nor Fulke Greville, neither Southampton nor Pembroke, would have dreamt of regarding that as a manifesto of the quintessence of their culture in the face of death, what could be his answer ? And if somebody pointed out that the speech is in exactly the declamatory style (though not in the normal versification) of Marlowe, would he be quite content to reply that æsthetic criticism must ignore all such issues ?

It is much to be feared that already some of Professor Abercrombie's students are beginning to suspect that an æsthetic criticism which is deaf and dumb about verse styles is æsthetic only in a sense

in which the word means "unreasoning," and that to exclude reason from æsthetic discussion is to make very short work of it. He may happen to know, for instance, that the "Psalms of David" have been assigned by scholars, with general agreement, to a number of periods, and *not* to David; the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes alike denied to Solomon; and the Pentateuch divided up among many hands.

The Professor, indeed, may have assured him that all that is merely scientific criticism, and has nothing to do with æsthetics, of which the function is solely to say "how fine," or "how wretched," about any or every "effect" in turn. In that case, however, is there not a risk that the student may harbour a horrid suspicion that "æsthetic criticism" is worth no student's while, but may fitly be left to his maiden aunts?

And that would be a pity, because it is essentially an æsthetic process, though Professor Abercrombie (perhaps prudently) abjures it, to realise the immense differences between styles and versifications in the Folio. The very use of the word "style," in the sense of "an artist's manner of utterance," is an æsthetic judgment, or nothing. And when Professor Abercrombie retorts that there is and can be no "agreement" on such matters, because such judgments are subjective, we have but to ask him in turn: Do you really suppose that *you* get agreement in your so-called æsthetic pronouncements? adding: If you do, you are the victim of a deplorable delusion.

It is true, of course, that the Professor is unaware

of the disagreements that actually exist within his own "school of thought"—if we can fittingly apply such a term in such a case. Professor Pollard deeply disagrees with Mr. Alexander, and with Mr. Abercrombie, as to a scene which the last-named describes as a comparatively "noble" exploitation of popular patriotism. Professor Wilson, whose sense of humour is less efficient than hard-worked, has been anxiously assuring us that there is a great deal of disagreement in the academic fold of orthodoxy. It is even so.

But if Professor Abercrombie supposes that he gets general agreement about the saintly charm of Prince Hal, or about his own description of Isabella as a "stern and terrible Protestant," or of "music of the spheres" as a sublime stroke wherever used, he is in a parlous state. A person of ordinary historical knowledge could inform him that to plan for the cohabitation of Angelo and Mariana, on the score that they had been contracted, was not a Protestant action at all; and even a maiden aunt might point out to him that the act so planned for was precisely such as the one that Isabella had reprobated in the case of her brother and Juliet. Such critics would of course leave the Professor in the enjoyment of his liberty. They could not shut him up, in any sense of the phrase. But they might interfere with his academic reputation.

And if it is thus notorious that there is *not* agreement within the fold of the Folio faith even as to the "aesthetic criticism" it permits itself, what can the

Professor suppose himself to be achieving when he denies that there is agreement about the alien hands in the Folio? If we merely count heads, there is a far longer list of critical names in denial of Shakespeare's authorship of TITUS and the HENRY VI trilogy than he can even now shark up of lawless resolute in favour of authenticity. And when he remarks, with a quite cathedral condescension, that "we *still* have critics who boggle at TITUS ANDRONICUS," he will find Mr. John Bailey as contemptuous of his judgment as he can be of Mr. Bailey's. Mr. Bailey, as we have seen, cannot believe that anybody can still call TITUS Shakespeare's work. Such are the harmonies of the orthodox sphere.

In short, in an academic world in which æsthetic argument is at a discount, the pronouncements of the most self-confident devotees of the Folio cult are lamentably open to all the disrespect which they bestow on the inquirers who seek to clear up the confusion established by Heminge and Condell. As our Professor says of others, his exiguous creed "has only subjective weight: it puts no obligation on anyone but the person who brings it forward." And this because he, unlike the investigators whom he supposes himself to dismiss, makes no appeal to any man's reason, having no reasons to offer. The creed is: "Heminge and Condell must have known; they could not lie; so that is that." On such faith is built the kingdom of error, in all ages.

§ 4. *The Logic of the Professor*

If the scrupulous student has any lingering doubt of the quality of Professor Abercrombie's intellectual processes, he may be invited to examine the logic of what the Professor evidently regarded as the most logical passage in his lecture (p. 15) :

"If we accept the theory of the composite authorship of the plays we know as Shakespeare's, we can only accept as *his* the work which conforms to our notion of his style. And on what do we form our notion of his style? On his work. And what is his work? That which conforms to our notion of his style. Where does this take us? Logically, nowhere: all the argument from internal evidence can do, is to bite its own tail. The only force in it is the prejudice from which it starts, the only direction it can take is to return whence it came. Its full scope is to come full circle."

It is a wonderful pronouncement. Even with one's acquired knowledge of the lecturer's mental processes one remains startled by the fact that, setting out to discredit all style analysis as a purely subjective process, he is the protagonist in this debate of the refusal to face the protuberant objective phenomena. Professing to dismiss all subjective æsthetics, he is actually dismissing the truly objective phenomena, and fulminating his own unmitigated subjectivism. Doubtless he would say that the title and preface of the Folio are objective phenomena, for our purposes. But so you might say that the daily course of the sun is an objective phenomenon, and refuse to inquire as to whether it can be for us deceptive. There is,

notoriously, historical deception, as there is ocular, and the remedy is by way of mental analysis. But the Professor appears to be congenitally of the tribe of the anti-Copernicans who refused to look through the telescope. Let us admit, of course, that they were "all honourable men," and proceed to note the nullity of the reasoning.

In the way of three-card-trick logic, the passage has an undeniable interest. You are presented, first, with two concepts: "his work," "his style," which we may call x and y . Then we are told that our concept of x depends wholly on y , and that of y on x . But equally these involve z =Shakespeare. No others can interfere. Given x , y follows; and the composite must be z , which is involved in x . Q.E.D. The trouble is that all three symbolised concepts are but covers for the substance of the debate to be solved, and are employed to conceal the issues, so that, on scrutiny, the x - y - z formula is a simple *petitio principii*, which might be termed infantine if it were not framed by a Professor.

The x really applies to a congeries of "works"; the y to a congeries in another category. It is precisely the differentia within each congeries that motive the challenge which the operator seeks to dismiss. For y is in no way identifiable with x , which is but a label for the congeries a , b , c , d , etc.; as is y for the congeries A, B, C, D, etc. That is to say, x is a disputed label, and there can exist no x y at all, in terms of the recognised congeries so labelled. Therefore z is in the same decomposed state.

In sum, y is a spurious concept. On the Professor's principle, we can have a concept of the style of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The suggestion could come only from one who either attaches *no* æsthetic meaning to "style," or is moved to propound a void verbalism. There is no such thing as the alleged y in the world of mind; and in dismissing the chimera we are left with an x under debate, and a contingent z .

Dropping the symbols, let us come to the æsthetic issues involved. At once the mind for which logic is reason, and not intellectual card-sharpping, takes note of the fact that the cards are being simply "forced." The truth, which is not going to make the Professor newly free, is that in reading the Folio as wholly Shakespearean we do *not* find *a* style which we can call "Shakespeare's." We find at least seven styles, perhaps ten—in the proper force of the term here: that is, modes of utterance in verse. (Prose raises separate problems.) Therefore we cannot without mendacity pretend that we have a notion of Shakespeare's style from "his work," when we mean by that last phrase, as does Professor Abercrombie, the entire Folio. The "logical" proposition is simply a quasi-logical "spoof."

The really logical student, having carefully studied the Folio, finds himself compelled to say: "The mass of dramatic matter here printed as 'Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies, Published According to the True Originall Copies,' cannot be intelligently supposed to be the

Works of one man, as they are further described on the page giving 'The Names of the Principall Actors in *all* these Playes'—a statement which, incidentally, reveals a happy laxity of assertion. When we further find that 'the true originall copies' and 'according to their first originall' are likewise heedless statements, in the opinion of a long line of 'orthodox' editors, we are rather prepared to say, not that Heminge and Condell could not lie, but that, having regard to the theatre's claims of copyright, they might plausibly argue that they *had* to lie."

In any case, finding seven or ten styles, the veridical student will ask himself, How am I to know which style is Shakespeare's?—taking Shakespeare to be an actual and, in his day, fairly well-known person, memorably acclaimed, in particular, by his friend Jonson, and by Milton. A Pyrrhonist, if such a man there be, might stand still for ever, feeling worse-starred than the legendary ass of Buridan. But, whatever we may think of present-day phenomena, the goodly company of Shakespearean and other editors in the past did investigate for the most part in good faith, gradually building up an edifice of rationally credible literary history. The reasoning inquirer, then, may reasonably believe that Marlowe, Kyd, Greene and Peele, and the rest, actually wrote certain plays, though their "canon" is still *sub lite*. And from these plays he can rationally form a notion of the styles of the various writers.

The first step in detection, then, is the recognition that *those* styles, with their purport of thought and

feeling, when found in the Folio, are *not* rationally to be regarded as Shakespeare's. Professor Abercrombie, who has no testable percipience of style differences, is probably quite honest in believing that any style *can* be Shakespeare's, while protesting that it really does not matter. But minds for which æsthetics is not a mere name for untested impressions and reactions cannot dwell in that Fools' Paradise. For them, "the style is the man," in the sense which that dictum can properly bear; and, well knowing that there are good mimics, decline to suppose that the master of a great style can take any satisfaction in writing in all the worse styles in sight through entire plays.

For, when we have eliminated or classified, in the Folio, the styles of the contemporaries in question, there is a style left which is clearly *not* theirs. And this is predicable in terms of what the intelligent reader knows to be not subjective but objective data. His reaction, indeed, his pleasure in this and his aversion from that, may be properly termed subjective; but nothing can be more objective, in matters literary, than the differences between blank-verse movements—the difference between say, Marlowe's and Milton's, and, collaterally, between Shakespeare's and Marlowe's and Milton's. These differences are as objective as those between the gaits or paces of the bull-dog, the greyhound, the stag and the cow.

Therefore, relying *pro tanto* on the undisputed testimonies of Jonson and Milton to the effect that Shakespeare's was a great verse style, charged with

great poetic purport, he looks for a great style so pervading the Folio as to make it in some way intelligible that the plays in general should be associated with the one name by the original editors. In a small number of plays he will either not find any such style, though he may find Marlowe's ; or he may find that or other styles in plays in which the discriminated style is also present. If then, he can trace that discriminated style in complete plays—such as the DREAM and JOHN—which from their relative diffuseness of diction are to be counted early as compared with others in which the style becomes singularly compact and pregnant, even elliptic ; and if he can further trace that peculiar style, with its unique verse movement, at various points from early plays onwards to the end, he attains the position of believing that at length he knows “ the style of Shakespeare.”

And then it is that, finding *the* style wholly absent from some plays, as TITUS and I HENRY VI, and only sporadically present in some of “ later ” literary quality, he seeks a theory that will account for the assembling of the whole mass in the Folio under one man's name. Such a theory shapes itself in terms of the apparent facts (1) that the theatre claimed property in its plays, condemning certain issues of them as stolen and surreptitious ; (2) that, nevertheless, certain plays “ owned ” by it, once printed, could go on being printed and sold by outsiders ; and (3) that this Shakespeare seems to have acted as general adapter of plays for his company.

There was, then, ostensibly no better way of vindicating the theatre's copyright than assigning all the plays in question to the theatre's "own man," though it involved a mystification. It is obviously likely that where he did not re-write, not finding it worth while, or knowing it to be unnecessary for business purposes, he revised lines, and curtailed or even modified speeches, leaving plot and style in general as they stood. To all appearance, such revision constituted authorship for legal purposes ; and it was of that matter that Heminge and Condell were thinking first and last, even though they were quite honestly proud of their "fellow" and his reputation. In all probability, their attorney would have advised them to do as they did. Shakespeare was seven years dead.

They give us indeed *prima facie* cause for doubting whether they clearly knew the Shakespeare style as differing from the others. But in that respect they are on a par with a considerable number of modern editors and Professors, down to Professor Abercrombie. What they must have known was that certain of the plays had never been more than superficially touched by Shakespeare for the purposes of the theatre. They must have known it was for good reasons that the curtailed editions of the two parts of the *CONTENTION* and the three fairly correct editions of *TITUS* published in Shakespeare's lifetime bore no author's name. Only by including these in the Folio could they publish their claim. They apparently had not even pretended to Meres that he wrote the

HENRY VI plays. But these were matters that it obviously would *not* be expedient to talk about in the Folio preface. Hence the mystification, which from their point of view was not only legal but innocent. About literary history as such they were not concerned.

The fact remains that careful scholars have found what they regard as Shakespearean matter in plays that were *not* included in the First Folio, to wit, SIR THOMAS MORE and THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN. Others have held similar views about the play of EDWARD III. On the principles of Professor Abercrombie, there can be no æsthetic opinion on these points at all, save one that is mere prejudice or preference, "imposing no obligation," etc.—like his own, in fact. For though the KINSMEN was printed in 1634 as by Fletcher and Shakespeare, it is in no early Folio; and, having only the publisher's external voucher, is on a level with the Apocrypha assigned to Shakespeare by a variety of publishers in his own day. Therefore it is vain to look within, for that can yield only "internal evidence." On the same principle those who claim and those who deny Shakespeare's presence in EDWARD III are equally negligible by "interpreters."

Finally, it is a matter of blank conjecture whether Professor Abercrombie would ascribe to Shakespeare either anything or nothing in THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM; and, since the Sonnets were not put in the first or any other Folio, it is a logical mystery that he should have *any* opinion on *their* authorship. For

they are no better verified, externally, than any of the Apocrypha.

Thus is Professor Abercrombie's logical . . . stratagem sufficiently decomposed. For the rest, its logical and critical quality may be indicated by applying it to almost any question of disputed authorship that scholars have handled in other fields. For instance (1) that of Chaucer's authorship of all or any of the Chaucer Apocrypha. Work the Professor's little machine, and you get these results: "How do you know Chaucer's style? From his work. And how do we know his work? From its conforming to our notion of his style. It is an argument in a circle. All so-called internal evidence is purely subjective, putting no obligation on anyone but the person who puts it forward. *Ergo*, we must hold Chaucer to have written *The Court of Love* and the rest, or at least all that was printed by Tyrwhitt as genuine. Otherwise, æsthetic criticism of Chaucer is impossible. Q.E.D."

So with the problem of, say, the authorship of the Pauline Letters, or the Fourth Gospel. "What do we know of Paul's work save from our notion of his style? How do we get that notion save from his work—that is, the *whole* of the Epistles preserved in the Church as Paul's? Internal evidence counts for nothing. If you say the style of the Fourth Gospel is not that of the Epistle of John you are relying subjectively on mere internal evidence. You know the style of John solely from the Gospel and the Epistles and the Apocalypse. To discriminate is to

show pure prejudice. Let us have liberty of interpretation. Down with prejudice ! ”

Such is the logical method. And there is a grave danger that this kind of thing will come to be known as the bray of Burlington House. It would seem to be in the interest of academic life, as well as of literary criticism, that the liberty of interpretation which is thus striven for, and which *must*, as the Professor justly argues, be granted, should simply be labelled for what it is, the indefeasible liberty of talking nonsense. The British Academy, indeed, might bring to bear *some* subterranean influence. But in the meantime the rest of us, using *our* liberty of interpretation, may fitly offer a plea or two against the illustration of liberty which we have been witnessing.

In the name of literary education, that is to say, we may fitly urge that there is “ an obligation ” on Professors to *be* logical when they profess to be so. And this broad rule might usefully be pleaded for : It is unmeet that Professors should dance indecorously before the ark. Furthermore, inasmuch as the performance is found to give afternoon entertainment to ladies at Burlington House, it might be guardedly suggested that it is not the vocation of gentlemen to miseducate ladies.

§ 5. *A Predicted Revolution*

It is possible that we, like the lecturer, have failed to make clear what he meant when he said at his outset that “ we may perhaps have come to the

beginning of another revolution [*sc* in Shakespeare criticism] which will land us once more where the Romantics stood. Not in their posture . . . No, it is not to romanticism, but to the ground on which the romantic *attitude* to Shakespeare *stood*, that I look for the next revolution to take us. And that, I submit, is safe ground: safer, I believe, than the ground *we* stand on now." The hoped-for revolution, it is fairly clear, is to consist in giving up all scrutiny of the Shakespeare Canon, and setting up the altar or the flag of the Folio, the whole Folio, and nothing but the Folio, save PERICLES, which got into the Third Folio, and is thus within the ambit of devout Foliolatry.

A last word, then, may be devoted to the Professor's theory of literary revolutions. It is a pity he did not give us a list, and, in addition, specify "the ground on which the Romantic Attitude stood." Who, exactly, were the Romantics? Coleridge was presumably one. But Coleridge hinted that the reader who thought the opening of *I HENRY VI* was written by Shakespeare lacked the human "ear" for verse, though he might have others. Lamb and Hazlitt would appear to rank as Romantics; but they both denied that Shakespeare had written a line of *TITUS*. On what, then, did they "stand"?

As to revolutions, when, exactly, did any take place? Malone, like Hallam, certainly agreed about the alien character of *TITUS* and *HENRY VI*; but he indignantly refused to go further. When Charles Knight in turn waved the Folio flag over *TITUS*, was

he stemming a revolution, or making a new one? Presumably he did not succeed on either hand. But did Swinburne? Or Fleay? And if they did, was Churton Collins revolutionising anything when he reaffirmed that faith in *TITUS* which Professor Abercrombie appears to regard as practically re-established?

In the haze of the Professor's historical retrospect nothing is very clear save that he trusts we are going *back* to a ground on which, as it happens, "the Romantics" did *not* stand (whatever their "attitude" did), so far as we can make out what he is driving at. The ground on which *he* thinks their "attitude" stood would seem to be that of whole-hearted acceptance of the Folio as being practically all Shakespearean, and of *PERICLES* as being a compost for which he was "responsible." And to this uncharted ground we are, he hopes, to get back by a new revolution. In sum, the Romantics at least took to themselves Liberty of Interpretation, which is what the Professor is really concerned about.

As usual, however, he seems to be in two minds. At one point he appears to hold that only a few obsolete minds "boggle over" *TITUS*. But at the outset he writes of "the ground *we* stand on now" as unsafe. What ground; and who are "we"? On page 14, "it is scientific criticism *itself*, in its latest and finest development," culminating in the irresistible Mr. Peter Alexander, which has made it clear that only by internal evidence can we hope to "purge the First Folio," which, therefore, is im-

purgeable, since internal evidence, like "what the soldier said," is not evidence.

The solution would appear to be that although "scientific criticism itself" has thus saved the Folio, somehow "we" are standing on another position; that the process of conversion is after all not a *fait accompli*; and that the Professor claims only to "believe Shakespearian affairs may be *once more* on the *verge* of a revolution," "we" being, after all, a motley multitude.

It is a rather vertiginous conception, in the absence of any indication of what a revolution is; and with the prophet claiming the admirable Professor Pollard as a supporter of a thesis which he has flatly rejected. But we may take heart of grace. There is truly no curb on literary, any more than on any other form of unreason, save the precarious survival of common sense in the majority. And to appeal for that is one thing: to be sure of it is another. Yet may we say, with reasonable confidence, that any critical revolution effected by the logical munitions of Professor Abercrombie will be

No graver than a schoolboys' barring out.

PART II

THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

CHAPTER I

A CRITICISM IN THE "TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT"

THE selection of the HENRY VI trilogy for critical treatment has proved useful in impelling the traditionist school, as represented by some of its champions, to positions which reveal at once its instability and its consequent impulse to evasive tactics. Perhaps "evasive" is an under-statement. The review of Division I of Part IV of THE SHAKESPEARE CANON in the *Times Literary Supplement*,¹ evidently the work of a diligent denizen of the traditionist camp, improves on evasion to the extent of advancing both explicit and implicit misstatements of the facts. I do not like to use stronger terms, for any long experience of controversy reveals that the less alert combatants, being incapable of realising aright the issues in debate, are in consequence quite honestly incapable of writing truthfully about an antagonist's position.

¹ March 27th, 1930.

Thus the reviewer under notice, being bent on creating a general impression that the author is really quite arbitrary in his conclusions, claims (a) that his own school¹ "is genuinely interested in this question of authorship"; and (b) that the present writer does not recognise "that the bibliographical evidence which shows how a text assumed its present form constitutes an essential part of his inquiry." These two propositions, in their different degree of importance, are evasive, and the second is explicitly untrue.

The investigation carried on in THE SHAKESPEARE CANON has always been in large part bibliographical, and nowhere more so than in the Division reviewed by the critic. It is there shown, on bibliographical lines, that I HENRY VI internally reveals the fact of its being a recast, and that this conclusion is corroborated by the external evidence. But as the author has put it elsewhere, the school which claims to be bibliographical, and which has indeed done some sound bibliographical work in the past (repeatedly acknowledged as helpful in this work) is now doing downright bad bibliography. This holds as to Professor Dover Wilson's treatment of THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, where his acceptance of a quite false bibliographical theory has led him into explicit self-contradiction.

A scrupulous bibliographer would have noted the internal evidence of interpolation (or expansion) in the opening scene of I HENRY VI, whether or not he

¹ Unlike Professor Lascelles Abercrombie.

would have recognised as bibliographical the induction that the hands of Greene and Kyd as well as Marlowe are there in evidence. The fact remains that the professed bibliographers have thus far remained blind to all the evidence alike, save in so far as Professor A. W. Pollard has admitted that *1 HENRY VI* is a recast, while seeing no clues to any author save Shakespeare.

When, then, the reviewer adds to the proposition cited the corollary: "this will undoubtedly handicap him in the eyes of those who believe that such investigation is the fundamental preliminary to any æsthetic study," he is doubling alike his *suppressio veri* and his *suggestio falsi*. The "æsthetic study" in this inquiry has always gone hand in hand with the bibliographical scrutiny; and the standing scandal of the methods of the traditionist camp (or *coterie*) is that its operations are conducted never for the ascertainment of the whole truth, either in bibliography or in æsthetics, but always for the buttressing of the unscrutinised tradition.

Professor Dover Wilson, for instance, departing from his true department of "printer's copy bibliography," has lately undertaken to extol the value of a study of the practice of the theatre, and in so doing revealed the fact that he actually did not know what the practice of the theatre had been at a point on which he gratuitously dogmatised. In the present inquiry, the needs and the practice of the theatre have always been expressly kept in view as a help to the induction; and now *The Times'* reviewer

actually alleges (c) of the author : " His traffic is not with the theatre : it is with those accidental by-products of the theatre, printed texts, which he examines [*sc.* solely] from the literary standpoint."

Nothing could be more false, in this connection. The needs or emergencies of the theatre have been shown in Division I to be main clues to the determination of the whole recast. And on that vital point the reviewer is careful to conceal from his readers that any such demonstration has been even attempted. The fact is that, for the author, Shakespeare has always been primarily intelligible only as " the man of the theatre," in the full sense of the term ; and the practice and psychology of the Elizabethan theatre have formed a main part of his studies. But, even as the professional bibliographers are reduced by their traditionism to doing bad bibliography, they are committed to putting the telescope to a blind eye in their professed examination of the theatrical conditions.

One false position commits to another ; and you can always realise the full badness of an erring reasoner's case as much by his evasions as by his misstatements. The main tasks of the reviewer under notice are to convey the impression (*d*) that the book before him arbitrarily infers the non-Shakespearean character of the play from the moral repulsiveness of its treatment of Jeanne Darc ; and (*e*) that its " æsthetic " verdicts are in terms of a subjective impression for which the author has no support from any consensus of criticism. In thus

arguing, the reviewer is careful to imply that the author's charges of having "no æsthetic opinions to discuss," and "in fact, no literary interests properly so-called," is directed against "*the* bibliographical investigators" in general, as such, and that those charges constitute a "tacit admission that Mr. Robertson's *own interests* are properly to be called [*sc* merely] literary."

The implications, it will be observed, are (1) that the problem of the Pucelle scenes is handled by the present writer solely on the lines of a moral repulsion; and (2) that his "literary interests" exclude all attention to bibliographical evidence. Again, the implicit propositions are false. The author does indeed discuss the question—which for the reviewer is apparently outside the field of investigation altogether—as to whether acceptance of a base code of theatrical procedure would affect our conception of Shakespeare in general. True, it is their inertia on such a problem that justifies a general charge of critical inertia against "the" traditionists. But the question of the authorship of the Pucelle scenes has been carefully discussed in Division I of Part IV of THE SHAKESPEARE CANON on concrete grounds of style tests and verse tests as well as of the great bibliographical fact that *the treatment changes its direction*; and if there had not been the clearest grounds, given by these tests, for the negative conclusion, it would never have been propounded.

To suggest, then, that the conclusion is one of mere moral prejudice is merely to debase the critical cur-

rency. Furthermore, the charge of lack of literary interest in the problem was expressly laid against two named writers, Professor A. W. Pollard and Mr. Peter Alexander, in respect of their recently written words. It was not laid against Professor Dover Wilson, who, so far, has made no such commitments over his signature. Curiously enough, the one writer who has avowed being strongly swayed on the subject of the Pucelle scenes by *mere* moral prejudice is Professor A. W. Pollard; and he has thus taken up a singularly uncritical position, in that he avowedly has no other tests of any kind by which to assign the worst scenes to anybody but Shakespeare, since he "distrusts all literary connoisseurship," and has actually decided that he "must" assign to Shakespeare *TITUS ANDRONICUS*. It would be hard to be more haphazard.

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CHAPTER II

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES

WE now come to the "æsthetic" problem, so skilfully confused by the reviewer. Noting the author's explicit avowal that in regard to the distinctive tests of Shakespearean rhythm "right vision or mental audition . . . is not easy," he makes the very grounds for that avowal pretexts for the conclusion that there can never be any agreement. But this, which is the ultimate issue, he refuses to examine further, though the indication of the way of advance is a main part of the procedure he has to review. Let the reader note the outstanding facts as to the dissidence, which had all been given to the reviewer by the book before him :

1. Swinburne assigned ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM to Shakespeare, *not* on any pretence that the verse is in Shakespeare's manner, but on the arbitrary assumption that only he could have conceived the matter of the play.

2. Tennyson found the Countess scenes in EDWARD III Shakespearean ; and several critics have assented, though Swinburne did not—Swinburne having here, as over 1 HENRY VI, proceeded on his perceptions of *style*. It has been pointed out that

Tennyson's probable ground for his inference was the broad identity of the versification in the Countess scenes with that of *THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA*, which play, the author had claimed to show, is proved by *all* the tests to be not Shakespeare's but Greene's. That thesis Tennyson did not live to meet.

3. Swinburne gave Shakespeare the Roses scene and the Talbot death-scenes. The wrongness of those attributions is part of the demonstration undertaken in the book reviewed. The reviewer's position is that there can be no solution by critical argument in any such case. Had criticism been so ruled in the past, Schlegel's blind acceptance of the Apocrypha would have stalled all debate, and no progress would ever have been made.

4. Similarly, in respect of (a) Dr. Gaw's assignment of the Talbot scenes to Peele; (b) Professor Tucker Brooke's assignment of the draft as a whole to Peele; and (c) Professor Quincy Adams's assignment of it to Peele, "possibly assisted by Greene," the reviewer argues that all those dissidents "in eyes and ears match" the author, and cries, "Who shall arbitrate?" He can conceive of no decisive ratiocination in the matter, and sagely dismisses arbitration where arbitration is outside the issue. We do not seek arbitration on an issue of logic, as here: it is the remedy for a deadlock of clashing *interests*. Will it be pretended that *that* is all this debate amounts to? The logical solution lies in noting that the assignments to Peele proceeded on the false presupposition that he alone of his group was Chauvinistic. That

error exposed, the valid tests operate. Let the student think for himself.

5. Yet again, Meredith found Shakespeare in what the great majority of critics now admit to be Fletcher matter in HENRY VIII. What then is to be done? asks the reviewer. Thus we reach, in effect, the conclusion: "Where critics have disagreed, there can *never* be any solution. *Non possumus*." But the reader has already noted that the error of Meredith *has* been overridden even by that consensus of criticism which the reviewer has declared to be impossible; seeing that even in the camp of tradition HENRY VIII has been ignominiously abandoned as composite, to say nothing of the other surrenders as to TIMON and TROILUS and interpolated plays—all virtual betrayals of the Folio flag.

To hope to advance rational investigation in face of all that professional inconsistency is indeed to be rather sanguine; and the author can but plead that he has explicitly recognised as possible a perpetuity of claptrap and unreason in the literature of official Shakespearean criticism. But one must persist *Als Ob*, assuming for purposes of discussion that alike negatively and positively true conclusions *can* be reached. The admission that ultimate discrimination is difficult can only by inveterately uncandid criticism be made a pretext for evading all discrimination.

Of course the inveterately uncandid criticism is there: officialism largely lives by it. But one proceeds on the hypothesis that there are honest intelli-

gences which, once set at work, can see these things :

1. Meredith's ear for differences of versification was untrained by any *critical* practice in the field of investigation, though quite simple verse-tests had sufficed, *ad hoc*, to enlighten Spedding, Ingram and Hickson, as well as the bulk even of the traditionists who read them.

2. Tennyson's ear was certainly excellent ; and had he faced the problem of the non-Shakespearean quality of the verse in the TWO GENTLEMEN he might conceivably have seen that the very fact of there being only *that one ground* (apart from some passages in other plays) for the inference of Shakespeare's hand in EDWARD III is itself an irreducible ground for suspicion as to the first-named play. Why is there only one ? If the style of the TWO GENTLEMEN is Shakespearean, why is it not found in all the plays ?

3. Swinburne, obviously a strong metrist, always vehemently refused to submit his intuitions of play authorship to any discipline whatever ; and, seeing how ineptly verse tests could be handled by Furnivall and others, his refusal is on that side intelligible. Yet the great majority of the critics *are* now agreed that the poet was wrong in assigning ARDEN to Shakespeare, inasmuch as he applied an irrelevant and invalid test and did *not* apply the verse tests which he ought first to have thought of.

And when we remember that Coleridge, to whose " ear " Swinburne paid tribute, confessed to having long followed the manner of Fletcher and Massinger, thinking he was following Shakespeare's, which he

at length perceived to be vitally different, we owe no deference to any merely prestigious authority. The recognition of the differentia between the verse modes of Fletcher and Massinger and Shakespeare is now open to any careful reader who is not rhythm-deaf. It is even open to the traditionists—always under that reservation. But, as was contended in the book before the reviewer, the trouble is that they have not undergone, and will not face, the simple training required.

4. It is thus a mere *ignoratio elenchi* to proclaim, as does our reviewer, that the professors and lecturers who assign I HENRY VI quite otherwise than the author does have as much authority as he. It is not a matter of personal authority at all. The author has indicated the checks and tests of matter, versification and diction, which they have omitted to apply; and the candid student will proceed to do for himself what his traditionist teacher tells him cannot be done.

5. Another implicit assumption on which the reviewer trades must now be exposed. In arguing that the author ignores bibliography—which is not true—he in effect implies that the bibliographical method, as he sees it, leads to a consensus which the method of applying all the tests does not secure. This is very far from the truth. Neither the bibliography of Professor Dover Wilson, who has no objective beyond scrutiny of the prompter's copy, nor the recent quasi-Alexandrian method of Professor Polard, attains to persuasion. Mr. Wilson's biblio-

graphical results have been expressly impugned by Sir E. K. Chambers as "disintegrative"; and Professor Pollard's spectacular surrender to the pseudo-bibliographical case for TITUS ANDRONICUS has appealed, I think, to nobody outside the *clique*. Thus there is really a better prospect of critical agreement on the comprehensive method than on that of alternate deference and disloyalty to the Folio tradition, which is now discredited for all students alert to the issues involved.

CHAPTER III

MORE ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES

IT is hardly necessary, perhaps, to dwell on the nullity of the traditionists's claim to be "genuinely interested in this question of authorship." That preamble leads only to the conclusion that nothing can be ascertained. What genuine interest can there be on that footing? The reviewer does not even pretend to the "fundamentalist" certitudes of Mr. Peter Alexander, sworn as Diehard to defy all "higher criticism" on the firm foundation of the Folio—which, incidentally, has been undermined by his collaborator, Professor Pollard. All the reviewer can see to be ascertainable is the fact of dissidence among others, ignoring the dissidence from himself. Not for him is the task of testing out the clues.

In view of the real difficulties, which have always been avowed in this inquiry, that attitude would be intelligible enough on the part of a traditionist who is *not* genuinely interested in the ultimate problem. But when the *pococurante* is at pains to suppress all the evidence and argumentation which he declines to face, and to make his readers suppose that they are being appealed to only by asseveration when they are invited to check a mass of concrete data. the pose

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of "arbitrator" on the part of the critic who negates arbitration is decisive as to his real attitude. Criticism that is thus uncandid is unworthy of the generic name.

And, of course, it is to be expected. What happened to the great theses of Galileo and Darwin in their day is sure to happen to the relatively unimportant thesis that the Shakespeare Folio is a composite preserving the work of many hands, which to assign in the lump to Shakespeare is to defy alike æsthetic perception and common sense in the name of a presupposition *already trampled under foot by its defenders*. But for those who really have a genuine literary interest in Shakespeare it will remain a matter of deep concern to apply all the technical tests which can enlighten us, beginning with the bibliographical and enlarging its scope, in order to reach a judgment which is reasonably scientific. In any event, that assumption is here avowed and proceeded on.

The author's controversial case, in sum, is that the antagonist school, professing to seek scientific footing by way of a limited and faulty application of bibliography, are now really ignoring the vital bibliographical tests, and parading as bibliographical conclusions the most untenable assumptions suggested by the motive of "vindicating the Folio." No worse piece of bibliographical argument than that of Professor Dover Wilson on *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* has yet been produced in this connection, unless the distinction be accorded to Mr. Peter

Alexander, Mr. Wilson's guide. For in the very act of assenting to Mr. Alexander he has cancelled alike his leader's thesis and his own, obviously avowing that the conclusion drawn cannot logically stand.

Such is the praxis of a professed bibliographer. A candid reader will at least grant that there can be a saner bibliography than that. Let it be here said, however, that no charge of uncandour can lie against such a bibliographer as Professor A. W. Pollard. His Shakespeareology has, indeed, grown sadly incoherent; but, right or wrong, reasonable or absurd, he is spontaneously candid—at times to his own confusion. To oscillate between the furtive and the forensic is no tactic of his. Even in capitulating to Foliolatry he has had the candour to avow that in his opinion Heminge and Condell would not have hesitated to include in the Folio non-Shakespearean matter.

When such a scholar *can* so surrender, with his eyes thus open, it is not to be denied that "æsthetic" criticism in the higher sense is in a backwater, on the academic side of things. But æsthetic judgment, nevertheless, is not the mere contest in vociferation which *The Times'* reviewer represents it to be. Even Professor Wilson, setting out with the proclamation that "Shakespeare" wrote much trash, ends his Academy lecture with a hyperbolical presentment of him as a Superman. Between these emotional and uncritical extremes of impressionism on the part of a bibliographer, there is a mean of reasoning

attention to the laws and elements of æsthetic communication.

For there is a slow æsthetic education of the civilised peoples, even through the fluctuations of literary fashion which seem to deny it ; and the history of Shakespeare criticism is part of the proof. We can see how, in an age in which the dissolute versification and dramatics of Fletcher had carried the favour of an unstabilised generation, and then won favour by reaction for the mode of rhymed drama, Dryden recovered in part the perception of the higher faculties of the greater performer. Neither on the part of Dryden, indeed, nor throughout the eighteenth century, was there any demonstrated recovery of the knowledge of rightness and greatness in dramatic blank verse, Milton's example having no educative power on the dramatic side. Thus it was possible for Coleridge at his outset to see no rhythmic differentiation between Shakespeare and the Fletcher-Massinger order of versers. But there were recipients all along, though they did not work on the problem.

And when Coleridge, in his undisciplined and auto-suggestive fashion, reached his maturity, he could see, and in part show, how *dramatic* excellence implies not only mastery of the medium, but a moral sanity as deep and true as the primary vision of human character. Only his unavoidable ignorance of the amount of non-Shakespearean matter in the Folio hampered the recognition and deflected his reasoning. But he had sufficiently seen that a great vision of life

excludes complicity in base conduct and iniquitous patriotism ; and that the seer who projected for us Coriolanus and Antony, Othello and Macbeth, could not be the author of *I HENRY VI* without being a changeling. And through his developed æsthetic sense he could see that the entire technique of the old play is utterly alien to that of the born poet. The two perceptions coincided.

What criticism can be without æsthetic awareness is shown, in Coleridge's period, by Schlegel's blind acceptance of everything ever ascribed to Shakespeare by gain-seeking printers and editors. It was because the later Shakespeareans had acquired something of Coleridge's vision that such uncritical credulity was discredited ; and the generation of the vigorous non-academic specialists, whatever their shortcomings, and whatever the misleading of idolaters like Knight, made impossible a quite uncritical orthodoxy. The old "New Shakespeare Society," we are told, dissolved when the members found they had reached a pass of scepticism that seemed to make their corporate continuance futile. And indeed they had done their work. But only under sheer general decadence could the task be left where they dropped it.

If decadence has come now, it must be because there is something *mis*-educative in the academic function, seeing that to academics (by taste or profession) has fallen the educational handling of Shakespeare problems. Spontaneously, it would seem, the academic instructor seeks at once "safety

first " and the prestige of didactic authority, these considerations preoccupying him when his higher duty would be that of working out every problem in the light of *all* past criticism, applying *all* lights, " thinking new and thinking true " on every issue. But one sees that for the average professor of long standing it is well-nigh impossible to make the avowal: " I have been wrong all my life in holding to an unthinking orthodoxy while every living science was progressing by a perpetual neology."

Thus men stagnate, because they will not actively think. In the mere matter of rowing, it has taken a generation for one university to realise that its boat-racing proceeded on false mechanics; and, the discovered secret being so far well kept, the other university, at the time of this writing, has not yet found it out. Yet in time, probably, even Oxford will intelligently study aquatic mechanics, and learn how to row. And then Cambridge—who knows?—may begin to study the mechanics of blank verse.

And so—let us at least proceed on the hypothesis of the possibility—even academic men really concerned to know the truth about the hands in the Folio composite will yet master the open secret of the differentia between Shakespeare's versification and that of all his corrivals, first by thoroughly reading and re-reading the latter all over the field, and then by analysing the Shakespearean technique from start to finish. After that, it will go hard if they have not learned that Shakespeare's whole " mentation " is involved in all his work. Of course,

if they have only taken to academic life as men go to the bar, for a livelihood, they may be content to plod for life in the old harness.

At times the routinist, whom we are apt to call names—iniquitously implicating an innocent animal—seems the most deplorable because the most unimprovable thing in nature. But of course that is an idle impatience with the facts of human destiny. Men normally resist ostensibly new truth because they are so constituted ; and we may depend upon it that we are all in the Book of Error for something. There is nothing for it but patient reasoning. Indeed, the resistance to new truth has the negative virtue of proceeding on distrust of new nonsense, of which the output in Shakespearean matters is still portentous. We can but have regard to the enlightening history of the sciences, and circumspectly take our chance. As William James would say, the only “ warranted duffer ” is the man who does not care.

CHAPTER IV

THE BURDENS OF MR. JOHN BAILEY

FEW there be who will make the avowal of indifference, or make with Croce (to say nothing of Professor Abercrombie) the brave renunciation of critical reason by asserting that it does not matter who wrote any given play. But there are many who, painfully conscious of falsities in the Canon, and no less painfully aware of the difficulty of a discrimination which they have not trained themselves to make, wreak their perturbation on the disturbers of their peace by aspersive allegations. Thus Mr. John Bailey, a good critic in other fields, but ill-starred in being entrusted with the handling of Shakespeare as part of our National Heritage—with Cricket, the Bible, the Parish Church, and the English Road—finds himself in unavowably sore straits.

It seems to him, he tells us, that the Works “are, *in substance*, the work of one man, and that man William Shakespeare, yet it is . . . difficult to deny that there are . . . *perhaps* even one or two whole plays which are by other hands.”¹ Soon the “*perhaps*” becomes pugnacious. “Of TITUS ANDRONICUS . . . I need say *nothing*, as *scarcely* anyone

¹ *Shakespeare*, 1929, p. 51.

thinks Shakespeare wrote it. There is, it is true, the ugly fact that his friends, Heminge and Condell, who ought to have had much better means of knowing him than we, included it in the first Folio."¹ That lamentable fact he sets down to the possible contingency that Shakespeare "at some time touched up" the play, adding a *very* few lines of his own, and let it pass under his name. As if Shakespeare had ever published it; and as if the three editions published in his lifetime were not anonymous! But not even the poet's indifference shall make Mr. Bailey let the thing pass.

Thus we see the distinguished amateur dismiss as having "scarcely any" sponsors a play which the bibliographical school, as represented by Professor Pollard, are canonising. Further, he assures us that, "admittedly," Shakespeare was "*often* a reviser of other men's work"—thus rivalling the somersault of Raleigh. But these are peccadilloes beside this cathedral pronouncement concerning "the critics who, during the last hundred years, have thrown so much light on [the] history, authorship, and composition" of our literature in general or in particular:

"Too many of them were victims of the absurd delusion that authors are never inconsistent with themselves either in thought or in style, and *indeed* are *always* at their *best*, a *delusion* from which an examination of any fairly long-lived modern author might have saved them. There is in truth *no author, not even* [*sic*] *Milton*,

¹ *Id.*, p. 86.

of whom such an assumption is true, and none of whom it is *less* true than of Shakespeare, *even* of the Shakespeare left to us by these critics after their prunings."

As who should say: "Not *even* Milton can have been at all moments of his life equally hungry." What Mr. Bailey is positing as a delusion is a mere contradiction in terms, a proposition without meaning. His proposition is worse than non-sense, it is anti-sense. Who says "best" connotes "worse," and "worst." "Always at his best" = "having no best"—an inanity, or a hyperbolical imputation of inanity. In imputing this categorical imbecility to an unnumbered multitude of critics, Mr. Bailey incurs the fit charge of vending an imbecile proposition. For it is he, and he alone, who is unable to conceive the absurdity of his own terms, since he can realise the nullity of a senseless generalisation, which cancels itself, only by anxiously assuring himself that no particular under it can be found.

When, then, he assures us (p. 51) that of all great masters Shakespeare is "the least equal," and again (p. 148) that "The lesson of art's self-restraint Shakespeare never learned or cared to learn, even in his greatest moments," we are heavily barred from acquiescence. That one of the greatest of all masters of language should commit the greatest lapses in his own art, and that he never cared to "learn the lesson of art's self-restraint," are, *prima facie*, highly unpalatable propositions; and we simply cannot receive them on the bare authority of a critic who demonstrably cannot conduct an abstract process

of ratiocination as distinct from one of rhetorical expatiation.

When, further, the same critic expatiates (p. 170) on "those magical words of which no one but Shakespeare has ever had the secret," we are at a loss to know whether he even attaches a meaning to his own hyperboles. There is an art of restraint for critical as for dramatic expatiation, and Mr. Bailey does not seem to "care" to learn it; unless, indeed, he supposes he saves his position (p. 171) by the words: "*no turning to severer art* robbed Shakespeare of the freedom and magic in which no poet has ever equalled him." If that be anything more than what it looks, to wit, verbiage, it must be held to mean that "severer art" is to be shunned, and that, peradventure, Shakespeare did well to refuse to learn "the lesson of art's self-restraint." If not that, what?

It is not an agreeable task to exhibit these self-stultifications on the part of a critic who, really possessing a gift of expatiation, is so dominated by it as to make it do duty for reasoning. The chief bane of English criticism, perhaps, is just this affectation of authority in a business in which persuasion is above all things desirable. There is some reason to suspect that the habitual use of the pontifical or the Bobadilian manner by Arnold and Swinburne, in a body of criticism which includes a number of categorical self-contradictions, has been a cause of much tacit disregard of criticism in general. And Mr. Bailey's choice to write as Sir Oracle, offering

not evidence but his *ipse dixit*, is likely to have similar result in matters Shakespearean. Not even the broad benison of Mr. Baldwin can recommend a dogmatism which impugns alike itself and all other dogmatisms.

Of course Mr. Bailey seeks to represent as dogmatism all attempts to discriminate Shakespeare's style save those decisions which he himself lays down with no apparatus of discrimination whatever. *He* is quite sure that Shakespeare did not write TITUS, or "very much" of the HENRY VI plays. But if Mr. Bailey can help it, no man shall be suffered to say *why* he thinks so—at least, not to the point of suggesting who *did* so write. One of this critic's cathedral pronouncements is that

"there has been another delusion, the most fatal of all [after all !]: that it is *easy* for a critic, however little endowed with style himself, to pronounce confidently, 'This verse is, and that verse cannot possibly be, by St. Paul or St. Luke'; 'These lines are certainly Marlowe and those undoubtedly Chapman.' "

It is not clear from the context whether Mr. Bailey knows any more about the methods of the Higher Criticism on the Bible than he does as to its attempts on the Shakespeare Canon; and still less clear on what grounds he ever allows himself to have an opinion about the authorship of a Biblical book or a Folio play. "I am far," he writes, in the true cathedral manner, "from wishing to speak disrespectfully of such studies which, *confined within proper limits*, are not only inevitable but right." His

large literary experience ought really to have saved Mr. Bailey from such a sad parody of Noodle's Oration. For, when all is said, Mr. Bumble ultimately avails for nothing among instructed people, and to tests we must come.

To that end, then, let us freely admit that there is always danger of critical over-statement in assignments of any kind in disputed plays. It is just the sort of danger incurred by Mr. Bailey when he pontifically intimates that *TITUS* cannot be by Shakespeare, without offering a suggestion as to why he thinks so, and further alleges that hardly anybody differs from him, which is an ignorant and erroneous assertion. If Mr. Bailey, becoming suddenly circumspect, repugns Swinburne's "*Aut Christophorus Marlowe aut diabolus*," he is within his rights, provided that nobody has shown him, by examples, how absolutely Marlovian the passage in question really is. But the normal practice of the disintegrators of his detestation is really not thus dictatorial. Only upon an array of analogies and homologies, generally speaking, and in terms of a notation of differentia in rhythm to which Mr. Bailey has paid no attention whatever, do they usually claim to draw their inferences. If they are ever as arbitrary as Mr. Bailey always is, they are only injuring their own cause.

The central trouble with Mr. Bailey's unfortunate book—unfortunate because he has really been fortunate in other fields—is that it is a monograph on Shakespeare which never attempts to show *how*

Shakespeare wrote, in terms of versification. That being so, even where he is right in a negation, as in regard to TITUS, he helps nobody to be intelligently right ; and if his oracular manner has influence with any readers he is committing them to as many wrong as right judgments. His treatment of JULIUS CÆSAR, from his confident outset with a discredited date, is a prodigy of *ignoratio elenchi*. In ignoring every demur save those, made by nearly all critics, to the inadequate total treatment, he evades every one of the insistent problems of authorship. And this he does for the usual reason, that he is impercipient at once of Shakespearean rhythm and of all the protuberant fossils of pre-Shakespearean diction in the play.

The literary treatment, then, of Shakespeare as one of the institutions of " our National Heritage " does not seem to inspire even an accomplished man of letters to any good purpose as regards the rectification of the Canon. Rather it reduces Shakespearean criticism to the level, at best, of a revision of " community singing."

CHAPTER V

ORTHODOX SUPPORT FROM PROFESSOR LEGOUIS

YET, let us admit, Mr. Bailey is not without critical countenance¹ in his unhappy proposition that those who seek to distinguish between Shakespeare and non-Shakespeare think of the dramatist as "always at his best." Not that any other critic duplicates that egregious counter-sense. But Professor Legouis of Paris, in his essay *La Réaction contre la critique romantique de Shakespeare*,² takes up a position of negation which probably Mr. Bailey would regard as supporting his. One need not go deeply into the proposition, implicit in the title, that what the traditionists call "disintegration" of the Canon has been as it were provoked by a "romantic" processus of some kind. It may suffice to note that Professor Legouis has not closely examined the historical facts. "Si," he asks,

"Si ce texte est aujourd'hui tenu par plusieurs comme suspect dans mainte de ses pages ; si l'on admet qu'il mêle à des scènes vraiment shakespeariennes

¹ It ought to be noted here that Mr. Dover Wilson (see above, p. 47) has strenuously reinforced the thesis.

² *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, vol. for 1928.

des scènes que le poète a seulement remaniées, . . . comment raisonner sur ce mélange comme au temps où l'ensemble de l'in-folio était accepté intégralement ? ”

When was that ? The “ romantic ” type or mode of criticism is supposed to have set in with Schlegel and Coleridge ; and before Schlegel and Coleridge had built up any school Malone had denied the Shakespearean authorship of the HENRY VI plays, besides rejecting TITUS with the majority of critics ; while other men rejected in whole or in part the SHREW, RICHARD II, PERICLES, and the COMEDY OF ERRORS. Nor was Coleridge’s “ romantic ” criticism a matter of seeing Shakespeare everywhere in the Folio : he too rejected TITUS and 1 HENRY VI. But if it please Professor Legouis to think of us as “ reacting ” not against the large anomaly of the Canon itself but against somebody’s romanticism—whatever that word-of-all-work may mean—he may be left to do so unrebuked. The question is finally as to the critical grounds on which the Canon is challenged. The difficulty is that ostensibly the Professor charges romanticism on those whom he seems to describe as reacting against romantic criticism. As thus :

Sans doute le scepticisme à l'endroit du texte peut se concilier avec l'admiration la plus béate de l'auteur. On est même en droit de dire que dans le cas, par exemple, de Mr. J. M. Robertson, le culte est d'autant plus fervent qu'il est purifié par mainte exclusion. Mr. Robertson veut en somme enlever à Shakespeare tout ce qui dans l'in-folio paraît indigne de l'idée exaltée qu'il a du poète.

Il exagère en un sens le dogme romantique de l'impeccabilité shakespearienne, mais il est en même temps convaincu de l'extrême inégalité de l'œuvre mise sous le nom de Shakespeare et il tient pour *détestables* maints passages qui eurent longtemps leur part des éloges sans réserve adressées au poète. Il est pour sa part l'adorateur du Shakespeare suprême *qui n'aurait produit que l'essence exquise de l'œuvre qu' on lui attribue*. Pour quelques uns comme pour lui *le culte romantique* reste donc vivant, mais à condition que le livre soit tout entier remanié, purgé des additions indues, nettoyé des erreurs et des excroissances. Curieuse combinaison de scepticisme et d'enthousiasme, d'où l'on se demande s'il sort de mouveau la figure d'une divinité ou si le dieu de jadis ne s'évanouit pas en fumée impalpable.

It is because I have a difficulty, at points, in seeing what Professor Legouis is driving at, that I leave his allocution untranslated, lest I misrepresent him. Never does he indicate what he means by "indigne" or "l'essence exquise," or the other expressions which impute a "culte romantique" to one described as a reactionist against "la critique romantique." And this abstractness where we particularly want concrete specification nourishes the surmise that M. Legouis, being a cultivator of hypotheses which seem to him duly anti-romantic, is moved to label as "romantic" all reasoning which confutes *him*, or critically seeks to know what Shakespeare wrote.

For example, M. Legouis propounded some years ago in his Academy Lecture on Shakespeare the quaint hypothesis that the poet in his youth drank

to excess ; grounding the inference on the fact that in some of the comedies and in the Falstaff scenes there is a lot of drinking, whereas in the later tragedies drunkenness is severely reprehended. On that exiguous basis of evidence M. Legouis lightly reached the surmise that a youth of hard-drinking was followed by a middle-age of repentance ; and when the present writer, for his part, protested that he could see no evidence for the conclusion drawn, the Professor seems to have in self-defence accounted for him as an " adorer of the supreme Shakespeare," and all the rest of it.

It may then avert further mystification of this sort if the author explains (1) that he was really not moved by any conviction that Shakespeare never got drunk ; (2) that he simply found M. Legouis's argumentation flimsy and fantastic ; (3) that austere comments on drinking occur in *all* the plays where drinking takes place ; (4) that the comment is naturally more sombre in the tragedies than in the comedies and histories ; and (5) that in the Poems and Sonnets, where, if anywhere, some clue to the young poet's personal proclivities or practice might be looked for, there is not a single mention either of wine or of the pleasures of drinking.

All this being so, it is surely Professor Legouis who is " romantic," in the sense of " romancing," whereas the gainsayer is talking hard common sense. " I shall not let you set up an idol," protests M. Legouis in effect to those of us who say there is no trace of the mind, manner, or matter of Shakespeare in

TITUS and certain other plays ; “ but I shall claim to set up my counter-idol, the portrait of a young man who injured his health permanently by drinking, and repented at leisure.” Now, the straightforward answer is that whereas we see not a shadow of evidence for the charge of drunkenness, we do not deny the authorship of certain plays merely on the ground that they are “ unworthy ” of an “ exquisite essence ” or a hypothetical deity. It is M. Legouis who wants to make a hypothetical Bacchus out of his own head.

And that he is thus apriorist in his negations is made fairly clear by his total abstinence from all examinations of the proffered proofs that certain work is that of other men than Shakespeare. An apriorist himself, he merely accuses them of apriorism and then puts the whole problem aside. It will really not do. He dare not deny that *some* scenes in the Folio are spurious. Then why ? Is it that *he* recognises them to be “ unworthy ” ? If so, he is the romantic of his own censure. If he is to be the honest critic, he must have his reasons—of style, diction, thought, or versification. But it is always reasons of style, diction, thought, or versification that are offered him in the cases where he will not examine !

The truth is that the formulas of “ unworthy ” and “ exquisite essence ” are irrelevant labels framed to conceal the facts at issue. The scientific critic does not by any means find the Poems exquisitely “ worthy ” of a great poet ; though he

112 THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

finds them really by Shakespeare. He does not count the first Sonnets to be nobly inspired, or the DREAM a great play, though he finds it genuine, and quite skilfully framed. And so with KING JOHN as a history, and the mere adaptation of the COMEDY OF ERRORS, or the acceptance of the conventional plots in MUCH ADO and TWELFTH NIGHT.

On the other hand, far from rejecting as merely "unworthy" all the matter diagnosed as non-Shakespearean in the plays, the scientific method assigns to Marlowe such work as "Clarence's dream" in RICHARD III, which many people greatly admire, and which has certainly high merit in its kind. Yet further, it assigns not only the origination of ROMEO AND JULIET in its present form to Marlowe and his coadjutors, but credits Marlowe with the brilliant draft of Mercutio, as well as the draft of Juliet in respect of the homologies with HERO AND LEANDER. The "assumption" here, if there be any, is not that ROMEO AND JULIET is an "unworthy" theme, but that it is a good one—so good that it was taken up by the pre-Shakespeareans.

Not on the score of its unfeminine *timbre*, but primarily on that of diction, substance and end-stopped verse, our inquiry assigns to Marlowe the draft of the epithalamium of Juliet, which some good critics so admire that they are too indignant to ask themselves whether the finger-prints here are not clearly Marlowe's. And it is certainly not in disparagement of the famous speech of the Nurse that our inquiry has inferred it to be non-Shake-

spearean, and suggested the possibility of its being an addition by Nashe.

In short, the student will find on investigation that Professor Legouis has arbitrarily misinformed himself on the whole matter, and is thus merely operating blindfold in an emotional reaction against the resort to scientific methods of detection of authorship which he cannot bring himself to apply or accept. More reasonably, he opposes the wilful iconoclasm of Professor Stoll, who, instead of first making critically sure as to what Shakespeare really wrote, and then proceeding to estimate his æsthetic values or qualities, saddles him with the traditional Canon and assails indiscriminately the alien and the genuine in so far as the dramatic method of the latter dissatisfies his latter-day ideals. But it is still a case of one arbitrary procedure against another. The hard-drinking young Shakespeare of M. Legouis is even more *à priori* a construction than Professor Stoll's.

And the true way of advance is to abandon arbitrary assumptions all round in favour of an inductive scrutiny which shall first ascertain what Shakespeare actually wrote and then inquire as to the dramatic powers associated with the powers of style and rhythm which are his technical specialties. Our inquiry is necessitated by the remoteness of the academic methods in general from this, the scientific ideal. It might be broadly argued that, while there are probably no essentially ethnic or racial specialties of critical error—each nation exhibiting much variety

114 THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

—the fashions of error tend to group themselves nationally. As thus :

1. The foible of British and American criticism in this field is traditionism, under which flag the academic critics cover their individual licence of hypothesis and schematic dogma.

2. The foible of French and German criticism is individual licence of hypothesis in defiance of tradition, the critic seeking to distinguish himself by novelty or impressiveness of thesis. M. Legouis's thesis of "youthful drunkenness" is an operation of that order ; and one or two of my German correspondents seem to me to illustrate subjectivism with a difference.

Had this inquiry proceeded on the subjectivist method of the veteran Professor Eichhoff, who decides what is "bad" and "good" in Shakespeare on the strength of his impressions of diction and sentiment, it might reasonably have been repelled as arbitrary. But it has never so proceeded. Even the conception formed of Shakespeare's diction as being, in its maturity, singularly pregnant, is reached by induction from the plays demonstrably his in respect of versification. The diction of the young Shakespeare is recognised as relatively copious.

In sum, the doctrine which Mr. Bailey uncomprehendingly disfigures into incogitable absurdity, and which M. Legouis, in his turn, disfigures into entire irrelevance, may be thus formulated :

1. Shakespeare's poetic writing varies, as does that of every poet, in degree of felicity of diction,

rhythm and exposition, even at a given period ; and varies also as between periods, exhibiting differences of felicity and of imperfection. Thus the early diffuseness has its shortcomings, and the late elliptic compaction has faults of another kind. This phenomenon of variation is a matter of universal law. Only the gratuitous absurdities of Mr. Bailey and others can make it necessary to postulate such things, which might have been supposed to be common ground for everybody.

2. *But Shakespeare's faults are his own faults, and not mere duplications of the faults of other men.* This also should have been common ground had not academic criticism been obfuscated by the tradition.

3. Traditionist criticism, rooted in Foliolatry, constantly imputes to him mere duplications of the faults of other men, *together with duplication of the better diction of other men in a versification which from the first he could surpass.*

4. Against all the inconsistencies and fallacies of Foliolatry, which obscure all the problems at every step, the scientific method seeks a consistent detection of hands, first through versification, next through diction, vocabulary, imagery and phraseology. Affirmations of vital difference in feeling, in thought, in ethic, are inductions from the tested work, not presuppositions.

5. Unfortunately, the orthodox academic Shakespeareans, refusing to seek discrimination of hands by the proper means, are committed alike to the acceptance of non-Shakespearean verse and of non-

Shakespearean thought and feeling, thus becoming doubly disoriented.

6. Over and above the negative miscarriage, there has been a positive. The very A B C of verse-tests has been bedevilled by the strange American fallacy which imputes to Shakespeare a pioneering part in the multiplication of double-endings; and thus a primary test which might have averted false ascriptions and false Foliolatry has been perverted either in the service of Foliolatry or in that of arbitrary hypotheses that flout alike the higher style tests and the lower. To save the fallacy, the plainest facts are suppressed.

It is thus particularly significant that the review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, which purports to deal with the situation and the theses presented in Division I of Part IV of THE SHAKESPEARE CANON, makes no allusion whatever to the vital problem of the early multiplication of double-endings before Shakespeare—a problem which lies across the threshold of our inquiry. Once more, let the student think for himself.

CHAPTER VI

A DANISH INTERVENTION

I

SHAKESPEAREAN debate, of course, is not entirely a matter of arguing as to whether or not Shakespeare wrote the whole of the Folio, or how much can be identified. Among other disputed theories is that of the authorship of the "Countess scenes" in EDWARD III, long since ascribed to him by Tennyson, with the approval of Fleay, and the disapproval of Swinburne. And that dispute seems far from ending. Hence the fitness of a scrutiny of the noteworthy essay on "The 'Countess Scenes' of 'Edward III'" by Lektor V. Østerberg (of Horsens, Denmark), in the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* for 1929.

It will be noted, at our outset on this exploration, that while the Foliolatrous school (apart from Professor Pollard) ostensibly stake everything on the absolute editorial veracity of Heminge and Condell, other critics affirm that they excluded from the Folio a play to which Shakespeare had contributed its most memorable section—an episode to which, some of them think, his mind approvingly turned back throughout his career. Naturally those earnest sectaries, of whom Lektor Østerberg is the best

118 THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

equipped, are not concerned to discuss the attitude or policy of the Folio editors. But it is bibliographically worth while to note (1) that a play on the subject is known to have been staged at Danzig in 1591;¹ (2) that a passage in Greene's NEVER TOO LATE (1590) was held by Fleay² to refer to one in EDWARD III; and (3) that in Fleay's opinion³ the original play was by Marlowe, and acted *circa* 1589.

The fixed facts before us are that our EDWARD III was registered at the end of 1595 and published in 1596. Fleay's statements⁴ that it was acquired with others by the Chamberlain's company from Pembroke's in 1594, and that it was "acted about the city in 1594," may be historically accurate, but his concluding position on that head,⁵ that this play "must have been acquired by Lord Strange's men with the other Pembroke plays in 1594," leaves us conscious of lack of strict evidence.

What may be taken as common ground is that, as the title-page tells, it *had* been "played about the city" before the end of 1595; that, whether or not based on a previous "actors' play," it was handled by the pre-Shakespearean academic group, perhaps as early as 1590; and that the Countess scenes as they stand represent a final recasting, possibly made early in 1592. Lektor Østerberg at least admits (p. 90) that the play existed "before 1592," and

¹ Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, iv, 10.

² *Life of S.*, p. 282.

³ *Id.*, p. 118.

⁴ *Id.*, pp. 21, 23.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 183.

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that "probably Marlowe, Kyd, and Greene" collaborated in it.

It would thus appear, in terms of Herre Østerberg's own view of the history of the play, that Shakespeare could have seen or heard or read it in some form before the closing of the theatres for the plague ; and that unless all other hands can be ruled out for the Countess scenes, all echoes as between the play and his poems of 1593 and 1594 *could* take place in virtue of imitation by him. But the Lektor makes it his thesis that the scenes in question are the work of Shakespeare, and that all parallels in the texts are to be so accounted for. The case has to be tried, then, on the internal evidence ; and it is the outstanding merit of the essay that to that end it makes the fullest survey yet attempted of the significant textual data.

This is a service for which Lektor Østerberg is to be thanked whether we agree with him or not. No one else, English or foreign, has so diligently noted all the relevant parallels ; and those who now make their decision in the light of this exploration may claim to have a better right than their predecessors to an opinion. For the logic of the inquiry may, nay must, be now regulated with a new vigilance.

II

Coming to that, the present writer is free to congratulate the Lektor, at a number of points, on the dexterity of what we may term his critical tactics,

as distinct from the larger scope of argument which we may call the strategy of his dialectic as a whole. It may indeed conduce to a clearing of the issue if I concede that the tactics pursued by him compel a stricter code of proof on the side of the argument for Greene's authorship.

That argument was, from the first, that (1) clues of vocabulary and phrase to Greene in the Countess scenes gave a *prima facie* ground for considering him as the final operator ; that (2) they clearly went some way to establish his presence ; but that (3) the idiosyncrasy of the versification, in respect of marked iambic proclivity and prevailing line-endedness, is the ultimate justification (or proof) of the inference that the work is his and not Shakespeare's. In that connection it was further granted that if THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA be accepted as a play drafted and written by Shakespeare, the special case against his authorship of the Countess scenes would not stand, since the former play broadly exhibits the same versification. The negative case, accordingly, turned on the thesis that the TWO GENTLEMEN, as a whole, is by Greene, and not by Shakespeare.

That battle, then, has to be fought before the thesis of Shakespeare's authorship of the Countess scenes can be wound up. But though Lektor Østerberg (p. 67) notes the existence of my thesis as to the TWO GENTLEMEN, he does not argue it. It is fair, I think, to say that his case consists (apart from *unargued* generalisations and asseverations) in the body of phrasal and other parallels shown to

exist as between the texts of Shakespeare's *poems* (1593-4), and a few passages in later plays. That is his tactic, at his best. The logical flaw of his total strategy, as I see it, is that he has not percipiently grappled with the fundamental problem of the nature of Shakespeare's blank-verse in contrast with that of his corrivals.

The strategy, in short, is that of one whose conclusion is foregone, and who forensically puts his own case in its most plausible forms. I allow, as aforesaid, that he makes clear the inconclusiveness of a decision founded *only* on Greenean parallels. As he vigilantly shows, a certain number of those may be outflanked by citation of prior passages from earlier authors—a thing always to be recognised in scrutinising Greene in particular. It is thus arguable that the debated scenes may have been written—not by Greene but—by one using prior writers whom Greene had *elsewhere* used. (For there has never been any question that Greene borrowed in all directions. Herre Østerberg affirms the fact with vehemence.) So be it: the reasoning then must be directed, on the side of the Greene theory, to parallels which are *not* so impeachable.

But here, in so far as the Lektor notes such parallels, his tactic impairs his strategy. One of the most notable of the Greenean coincidences between EDWARD III and Greene's certain work is the parallelism of those lines in a poem in his *ALCIDA* (1588):

More *chaste* than Vesta, goddess of the *maids* ;
Of greater *faith* than fair *Lucretia*,

and those in EDWARD III (II, i, 141-2) :

More fair and *chaste* than is the queen of *shades*,
More bold in *constancy* than *Judith* was.

Nobody disputes that the writer of the later lines must have had the others in his mind, *as lines*.

Accordingly the Lektor, without staying to discuss the argument founded on the parallel, escapes from the crux by simply writing (*italics ours*) that

"The poetical necessity of *bringing in the word 'chaste'* may have led the writer of E [EDWARD III] to imitate Greene's lines, just as Sh. did in the MERCHANT [I, i, 169 *sq.* echoing Greene's MENAPHON, p. 124, as to Jason's fleece] ; and when we observe that the ALCIDA passage just quoted belongs to a stanza which *also* contains these two lines :

The fairest flower, nipped with the winter's frost,
In show seems worser than the basest weed,
and compare them with Sh.'s Sonn. 94 (quoted above, p. 74) the odds undoubtedly are, that the E. lines II, i, 141, etc., and Shakespeare's Sonnet 94 were written by the same hand."

I am content to stake the logic of the argument from parallels on this point. According to the Lektor, the "Lucretia" lines in ALCIDA are certainly imitated in the play, but *by Shakespeare*, from Greene, whereas the sonnet line about festering lilies and weeds is Shakespeare's own, *because* it is duplicated in the play. I cannot imagine a more illicit induction in such a case. The ALCIDA stanza is the prior text. If the play undeniably imitates that twice over, how can a further imitation in a

Sonnet prove that it is Shakespeare who does the imitating of the ALCIDA verses in the play ?

The Lektor insists on Greene's habitual imitation or repetition of *himself*. Our argument is that Shakespeare echoes Greene in the Poems, and that, while it might be he who echoed the play in the Sonnet, there are clear grounds for suspecting that it is from another hand.¹ But the Lektor is surely bound to admit (1) that Greene *might* have echoed himself in the play ; and he might even be challenged to prove that Sonnet 94 was not written by Greene ; though the very bad imitation of the play in Sonnet 142, where the licit " scarlet [cheek] ornaments " of the play become the scarlet ornaments of *lips*, certainly suggests a worse artist than Greene, misusing him.

III

The logical crux, then, is this. If the anti-Greenean theorist rides off on the proposition that a very deliberate echo of Greene in the play is presumptively made by Shakespeare, he cannot possibly deny that, *à fortiori*, the constantly self-echoing Greene may be the echoer. Furthermore, *all* his denials of real parallels between Greene and the play are impaired by analogy. Then we are left with an anti-Greenean case which in effect admits the Countess scenes to have a plain Greenean cast, and merely pleads that Shakespeare was a deliberate

¹ See *The Problems of the Shakespeare Sonnets*, p. 156.

imitator of Greene—a *petitio principii* in this connection. Granting that the case for Greene is not to be established *merely* by the echoes, the case for Shakespeare's authorship cannot be made out by claiming that the plainest echoes are presumably imitations of Greene by him.

That is to say, the judicial decision must finally be given on larger grounds, to wit, the test of the versification in general—a test of which the application involves the facing of the thesis that Greene wrote the TWO GENTLEMEN. Had it not been that Shakespeare's authorship of *this* play was by them taken for granted, Tennyson and Fleay, in my opinion, would not have ascribed the Countess scenes to Shakespeare at all—though there is other Greene matter in the Folio.

If it should be objected that the Lektor builds his case to some extent on *developments* of Greene matter in the play, as pointing not to him but to another hand, the answer is that this is again a mere *petitio principii*. On what principle can it be argued that Greene would not develop, in a play, a maxim he had briefly laid down in a poem? The Lektor does not deny that the theme developed in the play (II, i, 434 sq.) in the passage beginning:

The greater man, the greater is the thing
Be it good or bad, that he shall undertake,

and in LUCRECE (1004 sq.) in the passage beginning:

The mightier man, the mightier is the thing
That makes him honoured or begets him hate,

is posited earlier by Greene in an ode in the tale PHILOMELA (1592) :

Sin in Kings is sin, we see,
And greater sin 'cause great of 'gree ,
Majus peccatum, this I read,
If he be high that doth the deed.

Here we are dealing with a current moral commonplace ; and Lektor Østerberg appears to be quite comfortable in the view that Shakespeare earnestly *elaborated* it *twice* ! To the citation of the PHILOMELA form, he replies : “ But this *cannot account for* the wording and elaboration of the two passages just quoted ”—surely a very vacuous argument ! In any serious sense of the phrase, *nothing* can “ account for ” a double elaboration of a moral platitude by a great poet. But that Greene should in the play elaborate it, after having previously put it tersely, and that Shakespeare, padding out his poem for the market, should imitate the play, is surely a more plausible hypothesis than that Shakespeare should labour to make two separate “ developments ” of the maxim.

So obvious a purpose of special pleading entitles us to say that in this field the case is not being judicially handled, and that from inconclusive tactics we must proceed to the vital issues.

IV

But now, sooth to say, we find that the Lektor's tactics have crippled his strategy, as is apt to be the

way with special pleading in criticism. Leaving to the close of his essay the vital question of the organic quality of the versification, he finds himself forced to a thesis which he had previously barred. Near his outset he writes, in set terms :

"Its author is a master of form ; he handles his language with superior skill, and can afford to choose and arrange his words with a conscious regard to sound, weight, and colour ; and he is a born versifier, who pours out his elegant lines fluently, but with varying speed and cadence, *never enslaved* by his metre, though it is *very regular*."

This, surely, is the panegyrical fashion of a critic who is not sensitive to versification. A "very regular" blank verse is one that *lacks* varying speed and cadence. He really cannot "have it both ways." And when, towards his close, the Lektor comes to the problem of the versification, his tactical method leads him into an argument to the effect that the style of the Countess scenes is not "very regular" at all. He enters upon it, indeed, with a winning modesty, observing (p. 84) that "With regard to *versification*, a foreigner's general impression, of course, is no argument, and even connoisseurs among Shakespeare's countrymen may be deluded in their judgment (though of course Tennyson counts)," adding the claim that his quotations "seem to show a far-going similarity between E and Sh.'s youthful work in *rhythmic formulation*. . . ."

The answer is, first, that the Lektor's impression, in respect of his scholarly knowledge of the literature,

would have as much value as anybody's, since few English students have read over the ground so diligently as he. But, secondly, *no* impression is of any authoritative weight as to versification unless it proceeds on a close comparative study of verse structures; and he is here in the position not of an unqualified "foreigner," but of very many English scholars who have never explored the problem. I have already indicated how, in my opinion, it came about that Tennyson, with his excellent ear, found the versification in question "Shakespearean." Swinburne and Meredith, poets both, similarly divagated on other problems.¹ The critical comment must be that in such a case no "authority" exists, and that the whole problem must be worked out by exact critical tests.

To such tests our Lektor cannot come, with all his knowledge, because he will not closely note the phenomena, and has committed himself to self-contradiction in terms. Professing to face, at his close, the vital challenge, he takes my standardised or symbolised list of fourteen forms of Shakespeare's habitual variation of blank-verse rhythms *in his early work*, and professes to produce from the Countess scenes sixteen "verse variants exactly answering to Mr. Robertson's Shakespearean types" (all except one).

Now, the fatal fact is that ten of the Lektor's selected lines do not at all exactly correspond to my

¹ See above, p. 88, as to the difficulty thus set up, and the attempt to turn it to nihilistic account.

specimens ! I do not say that this fact would necessarily be fatal to his thesis ; because another pleader might conceivably find, scattered through the Countess scenes, more exact parallels. But the mis-carriage proves two things : first, that the Lektor does not clearly perceive rhythmic differences in scansion ; second, that he misses the point of the argument. The evidence of Shakespeare's complete command of the resource of variation is that his variety is continual, leaving no form of cadence predominant, and making him often produce ten successive lines of which no pair are rhythmically alike. And the negative case against his authorship of the Countess scenes is that there one *predominant* progression is stamped on long stretches of verse.

V

Of course there are variations : no writer of verse could avoid them, unless, perhaps, Gascoigne might ; and Marlowe's draft is frequently in evidence. But the distinction between Shakespeare and his earlier corrivals is that his variety is unbounded, while they, in different degrees, vary only as it were by accident, and Greene, in particular, is exceptionally iambic. I have repeatedly given illustrations ; but it may be well to submit here examples of the sustained predominance of one norm in the Countess scenes :

That love you offer me, you cannot give,
 For Cæsar owes that tribute to his queen ;
 That love you beg of me I cannot give,

For Sara owes that duty to her lord.
He that doth clip or counterfeit your stamp
Shall die, my lord ; and will your sacred self
Commit high treason [a]gainst the King of Heaven ?
To stamp his image in forbidden metal,
Forgetting your allegiance and your oath ?
In violating marriage' sacred law,
You break a greater honour than yourself.
To be a King, is of a younger house
Than to be married ; your progenitor
Sole-reigning Adam on the universe
By God was honoured for a married man,
But not by him anointed for a King.

II, i, 251-66.

But neither will I do : I'll keep mine oath,
And to my daughter make a recantation
Of all the virtue I have preach'd to her.
I'll say, she must forget her husband Salisbury,
If she remember [!] to embrace the King ,
I'll say, an oath may easily be broken,
But not so easily pardon'd, being broken ;
I'll say, it is true charity to love,
But not true love to be so charitable ;
I'll say his greatness may bear out the shame,
But not his kingdom can buy out the sin ;
I'll say, it is my duty to persuade,
But not her honesty to give consent.

II, i, 354-66.

Here, it will be noted, to say nothing of the bad ideation and phrasing, the rhythm of every line is end-stopped, even when here and there the sense is not. That is to say, every line ends on either a stressed

syllable or a double-ending which heightens the stress in the act of modifying the metre. This is the kind of strenuous iambic monotony of form which pervades Greene's work, and is to be matched by the yard from his accepted plays. It was long ago noted by Dyce. His variations are in general so merely incidental that they cannot cure the line-ended clasp and clink of the whole.

That there are speeches in the Countess scenes which do *not* conform to this proclivity is one of the reasons for insisting that in all likelihood Marlowe, who had drafted the play, had to a considerable extent drafted these scenes. The marked echoes from him, ignored by Lektor Osterberg, repeatedly affect the rhythm; and in the King's speech which follows that last quoted from, we have not only a welcome relief from the pounding iambic monotony but a pair of lines:

Like as the wind doth beautify a sail,
And as a sail becomes the unseen wind,

which point us to HERO AND LEANDER (I, 225-6):

A stately builded ship, well rigg'd and tall,
The ocean maketh more majesticall.

The lifting quality of the poetry is Marlovian. Our thesis is that Greene re-cast and largely rewrote the scenes, and (an item not discussed by Lektor Osterberg) that he did so with the more zest and volubility because the theme is one that he had handled a dozen times over in his prose tales, as well as in FRIAR BACON and JAMES IV. Hence the expatiation

and the expansion of matter which Marlowe would have treated more briefly.

VI

If, then, a reader does not detect in the bulk of the versification, as above sampled, an organically different movement from that of Shakespeare's verse even in its earliest examples, it is to be feared that he is not open to rhythmic evidence. When Lektor Østerberg matches my first (artificial) sample of varied line :

With the lōng swīng of thīs fācīlīt̃¹

with the play line (possibly corrupt ; certainly bad) :

In a deep march of penetrable *groans*,
he actually equates a line with a marked end-stress to one in which end-stress is markedly avoided ; and similarly, in most of his examples, he misses differences alike of stress and cæsure. I can but repeat, then, that the genuine Shakespearean verse, even in its earlier cast, as in the DREAM, is (a) rhythmically continuous, (b) not end-stopped, and (c) so varied in the order and weight of its pauses and its stresses that the sensation of monotony is simply excluded. Three samples should suffice :

Then I must be thy lady ; but I know,
When thou hast stol'n away from fairyland
And in the shape of Corin sat all day

¹ One stress mark in my text was a misprint, and one u mark was dropped,

132 THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
 To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here
 Come from the farthest steppe of India ?
 But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
 Your buskin'd mistress, and your warrior love,
 To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
 To give their bed joy and prosperity.

M.N.D., II, i, 64-73

Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
 To follow me and praise my eyes and face,
 And made your other love, Demetrius,—
 Who even but now did spurn me with his foot—
 To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
 Precious, celestial ? Wherefore speaks he this
 To her he hates ? And wherefore doth Lysander
 Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
 And tender me, forsooth, affection,
 But by your setting on, by your consent ?

Id., III, ii, 222-231

These are the forgeries of jealousy :
 And never, since the middle summer's spring,
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
 By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
 Or in the beached margin of the sea,
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
 But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
 As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
 Contagious fogs, which, falling in the land,
 Have every pelting river made so proud
 That they have overborne their continents. . . .

Id., II, i, 81-92,

Here the mere pausation, occurring at any point in a line, combines with the lightening of the iambic stresses (as in the last cited line) to make every verse a new progression ; and so far from cultivating the ictus which marks the end of the line with a stress, the poet as it were instinctively shuns it, either by choosing words ending lightly, as " jealousy," or " Demetrius," or " affection," or " fairy land," or " India," or " prosperity," or " continents " ; or with open vowels, as " know," or " sea " ; or by carrying on the sense to the next line ; or by putting a trochee before a final iambus, as in " forest or mead." Always the subtle effect is to avoid that clank which in the Greene line heightens to the line-end.

A typical Greene line is :

That love you offer me you cannot give,
or

I'll say it is my duty to persuade ;
and when he resorts to the double-ending, as if to muffle his thud, it actually aggravates the monotony, as in the above-cited lines ending with " broken " ; whereas with Shakespeare, who at this stage makes little use of the device, the double-ending is fused with the rhythm, unless, as at times, he is *seeking* emphasis, as here :

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou remember'st.
In sum, we are forced to infer that in blank-verse he spontaneously *disliked* the clanking, end-stressed iambic line, which for Greene is normal, and which

is the commonest form in the Countess scenes. He seems spontaneously to coin such lines as

Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set,

where the pedalism of the iambic line is escaped and as it were disdained, and yet we know that it is really done with the alertest art.

Even Lektor Østerberg, one can see, has an uneasy perception of difference while he is protesting that he can see none. For, when he goes about to meet the challenge with a sample of what he regards as run-on rhythm from EDWARD III, he "cooks" his example in a fashion fitted to make a rhythmist stare.

"What shall we say then," he asks, "about a case like the following :

Lust is a fire, and men, like lanthorns, *show*
Light lust within themselves . . .
Shall the large limit of fair Brittany
By me be overthrown ? and shall I *not*
Master this little mansion of myself ? . . .
I go to conquer Kings ; and shall I then
Subdue myself and be my enemy's friend ?

I confess that I am unable to see any difference between the two."

Let us then patiently point out the disparities.
(1) The Lektor has actually made *elisions* at two points. Why ? Because the complete text is so line-

ended! (2) The very first line, carrying on the sense, yet makes an end-stress, because "show" is followed by "Light"—another stress, a spondaic first foot arresting the rhythm where only an iambus (as with "Deny" after "Lysander") could have made it fluid. (3) The same rhythmic fatality occurs with "not" and "Master," and by this time the line-ended beat of the whole is so stamped on the speech that even the "then" fails to escape the end-stopped cadence, despite the carrying-on of the sense. ' Thus the very sample chosen and *chopped* for the defence reveals that the cited writer *felt* in end-stopped lines, and both consciously and sub-consciously sought that form and effect!

That, as aforesaid, there are some departures from the iambic norm I have never disputed. Neither Greene nor any of his colleagues missed such departures. It is a question of *predominant proclivity*; and it is the miscarriage of our industrious critic to evade that fundamental issue. I do not doubt that, like a witness in a recent detective-novel, Lektor Østerberg has "an unswerving regard for the truth except when carried away with the desire to convince." But critics should not permit themselves the exception.

VII

Finally, when Lektor Østerberg attempts to show that Greene could not well have recast the Countess scenes early in 1592, he ties his own case in a series

136 THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

of self-strangling knots. The play, he writes (p. 88), "presupposes some knowledge of Daniel's *ROSAMOND*, which was first published in the spring" of 1592; "Greene died on September 2 after having been mortally ill for a month; the theatres were closed in June, after which time the starving poet would not waste his time in writing for the stage." Then he continues:

"But even supposing that Greene had composed it, the question remains, how his manuscript could possibly pass into the hands of his hated antagonist Shakespeare; for, as *EDWARD III* was not printed till 1596 and never acted between June, 1592, and April, 1594, only the actual possession of the manuscript could enable Shakespeare to borrow so thoroughly and intensely as must then have been the case, not only for extensive use in *LUCRECE*, but also to supply material for *ROMEO*, *LOVE'S LABOURS*, etc."

Let us follow the Lektor step by step. To begin with, the case for Greene is not tied to a date in 1592: he may have done the work late in 1591: though it is unlikely that he could have done it earlier.

Secondly, his position as to use made of Daniel's *ROSAMOND* has been expressly barred by himself when, near his outset (p. 63) he writes that, save for one apparent echo between *ROSAMOND* and our play, "the contact between *E.* and *ROSAMOND* is *scanty and somewhat elusive*." Quite so! The Lektor at his outset had thus driven himself to the sad shift: "This seems to argue that *ROSAMOND* was *well known*

to the writer of E. but by him considered *as a source already sufficiently utilised.*"

That is to say, Shakespeare had been "influenced" by Daniel (p. 62); but, having freely echoed Daniel in his *LUCRECE*, did not think fit to do so again in the Countess scenes. All the while, the only echo specified is a tag that is likely to have been common before Daniel—a kind of possibility ignored or stressed by the Lektor just as it suits his case. The upshot of the argument is (1) that Greene, even without seeing (as he well might) Daniel's poem in MS. before printing, could perfectly well have written the Countess scenes either in 1591 or in 1592.

Thirdly, this being so, Shakespeare could perfectly well have known the Countess scenes sufficiently to imitate them in *LUCRECE*, published in 1594. If, as the Lektor appears to agree, the play was "acquired" by Shakespeare's company in 1594, it may have been accessible to them at any time during the closure of the theatres, or before. Nay more, we are expressly told¹ that the Pembroke company were acting in the provinces while the London theatres were shut. Shakespeare, then, may even have *acted* in *EDWARD III.*,² though it is more probable that he had seen it acted in 1591 or 1592.

Fourthly, the description of Shakespeare as

¹ Prof. Quincy Adams, *Life of Shakespeare*, 1923, p. 143.

² The modern theory (not accepted by the present writer) that Shakespeare had been a member of the Pembroke company, is at this point very unfavourable to the Lektor's case. But we do not really *know* that our play had been owned by the Pembroke company. It is an inference.

Greene's "hated antagonist" has no bearing on the issue save inasmuch as it creates a fresh entanglement for the Lektor's case. If Greene's hatred, howsoever excited, was an obstacle to any knowledge of the play by the Shakespeare company while the theatres were closed, would it not equally be an obstacle when they were reopened? They might have negotiated for it in 1591 or 1592, before Greene's death. In any case, Shakespeare may have then seen it.

The Lektor's treatment of the plague question is lax. It is on record¹ (1) that the Pembroke men were summoned to play before the Queen on December 27, 1592, and again on January 6, 1593; (2) that on December 29 the inhibition was raised, the plague having abated; and (3) that not till about February 1, 1593, was the inhibition again imposed when the death-rate rose anew. Then it was that the Pembroke men began to travel in the provinces. From what we know of their dealings with the Strange company, it seems likely enough that EDWARD III was discussed between the managements.

The negative case, thus seen to be of the weakest, is further wrecked by the Lektor's own reasoning. "We may well ask," he writes (p. 89):

"Would Shakespeare the poet feel the need, nay, would Shakespeare the man feel the inclination, to exploit another man's, Greene's or anybody else's, manuscript in a manner which would almost amount to sly

¹ Adams, as cited,

plagiarism and endanger his estimation among his friends ? ”

The meaning is that, if Greene wrote the Countess scenes, Shakespeare “exploited” them in the LUCRECE in a manner almost amounting to sly plagiarism. But it is the Lektor himself who has argued, as above noted, that Shakespeare, writing the Countess scenes after the fulmination of Greene’s hatred in his death-bed tract, deliberately exploited several of the lines of Greene’s poem in the ALCIDA, to say nothing of the maxim in the PHILOMELA ode. He really cannot have it both ways, here or anywhere else. It might indeed be accounted “sly plagiarism” to adapt the ALCIDA lines as they are adapted in the play, if Greene himself were not the adapter ; but in the Elizabethan age nobody would so have denounced Shakespeare for echoing and “developing” ideas from EDWARD III in the LUCRECE, which was essentially expatiation.

As to our conclusion that Shakespeare *did* echo the play in LUCRECE, after knowing how the dying Greene had inveighed against him, the fact of Greene’s attack can no more be turned against the theory of Greene’s authorship than in favour of Shakespeare’s. If it tells against the former it tells against the latter. And when we follow the Lektor’s polemic on this line we may reach a conception of Shakespeare’s character in which we can better rest than he in his.

“Would Shakespeare,” he asks, “answer this man’s remark about unsatisfactory LUCRECE poems

(“ the vain endeavour of so many pens ’) by composing one in which he ‘ ransacked the treasury ’ of the very man who made the remark ? ” (this after claiming that Shakespeare *had* exploited Greene). The simple reply is that to call the LUCRECE an “ answer ” to the line in the play, or a ransacking of a “ treasury,” is neither here nor there. The play *might* have given him his impulse ; but a LUCRECE was just as likely an experiment for him, in the way of pot-boiling, as a VENUS AND ADONIS. And he was surely not more but less likely than another, after writing his poem, to write in the play of “ the *vain* endeavour of so many pens,” disparaging all his predecessors !

To call that “ a plausible expression of modesty in the valuation of his own efforts ” is strangely to obscure the fact of the disparagement of every other poet who had written on the theme ; and to find modesty in a poet’s mention, in a newly recast play, of his own newly published poem, is to carry panegyric far. But to conceive Shakespeare as compassionating the dead and ill-fated poet who had aspersed him is no strain on our conception of him.

The mention of “ learning late deceased in beggary,” in the DREAM (V, 53) has been by some regarded as such an utterance of compassion ; though the jest on Bottom’s dream as so styled because it had no bottom is plausibly held by Fleay to glance at Greene’s MAIDEN’S DREAM, which had no maiden. Shakespeare was not a hater ; and Greene’s very proneness to malice might be to him a monition, the more so if he felt, as he might have done, that

it was a hard fate that left the prolific Greene to die in indigence while players made money. And *if* he knew Greene's anger to have been evoked by learning that Shakespeare had altered the opening of *THE TWO GENTLEMEN*, he might be none the less compassionate.

We really cannot now get inside the skins of all those men so far as to trace all their motives; but nothing we know of them bars the inference that the Countess scenes, first written by Marlowe, whose hand has left many traces, were recast by Greene, who had already collaborated with Marlowe elsewhere, and had many times dealt with forms of that particular theme.

For the rest, the Lektor's further general reasoning in support of a theory which so conflicts with the internal evidence is either otiose or suggestive of inferences which carry us yet further away from his position. Thus when he assumes Shakespeare to have been ransacking *his own* treasury for passages in *ROMEO* and the *MERCHANT*, he does but newly remind us that both of those plays must be regarded as having had pre-Shakespearean forms, and that parallels between them and *EDWARD III* may signify survivals of Greene matter in the Folio.

Not only is the touch about Jason's fleece conducive to such a hypothesis; but the structural parallel between the repetitive passages in *EDWARD III* (II, i, 14-21; 156-163) and that in the *MERCHANT* (V, 193-197) raises the question of Greene's having been at the bottom of the latter. It is a mode trace-

able to him, in *LOCRINE* (IV, i ; V, ii). If Shakespeare had penned both the repetitive passages in *EDWARD III* and that in the *MERCHANT*, he would here again be making a triple use of a rhetorical stroke of Greene's. Is it likely ; and is the theory a complimentary one ?

As to Sonnets 94 and 142, in the first of which the "lilies that fester" line is ill employed, and in the second of which the phrase "scarlet ornaments" is *very* ill employed indeed, there are plain grounds in the style for doubting Shakespeare's authorship of either. But if we are to suppose, with Lektor Østerberg, that Shakespeare wrote all the passages, and was so delighted with his work in *EDWARD III* that he either could not forgo repeating such conceits in sonnets or, after putting them in the sonnets, was moved to reproduce them in the plays, we are conceiving a Shakespeare certainly not made newly admirable.

And our final comment on the Lektor's thesis (p. 89) that Shakespeare "kept up a constant, even doting fondness for this little production, of all others, and *felt prompted to go on drawing upon it through the greater part of his career*," is that it is an extravagance utterly unjustified by his far-fetched argument and feeble evidences, and explicable only by the extravagance of his own estimate of "the Countess drama."

"To me," he writes in closing, "it was a source of æsthetic and true poetic enjoyment for years before it became an object of philological research." Reasons have been given for the verdict that the

Lektor's æsthetic satisfactions are largely independent of æsthetic values in the matter of blank verse ; and the same must be said of an estimate that grades the poetic values of the Countess scenes at a high "Shakespearean" level. An extravagant estimate has motived an ill-accredited theory and an exorbitant claim.

We can but hope that the painstaking research of Lektor Østerberg, though directed to a thesis which is found so untenable, will indirectly lead to further and more profitable exploration. Some of his parallels seem to me, as aforesaid, to point suggestively to the pre-Shakespearean collaboration in ROMEO and the MERCHANT ; and that Greene had a hand in a play which underlies LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST, as in a LOVE'S LABOUR'S WON which underlies ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL, is a hypothesis that may at least usefully stimulate the study of the former comedy, which presents a problem thus far unsolved.

CHAPTER VII

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY

§ I

IF we can trust the recorders of imagined crime, it commonly happens that when a tragedy occurs openly in the sphere of social civilisation, and passers-by investigate, there comes a Voice in uniform saying, "What is all this about?" To many, it must be reassuring, even if their curiosity remains unassuaged. And so, in the sphere of literary detection, there must still attach to the anonymous Voice of Authority a calming and satisfying reaction, shaping itself in the thought: "this is being properly looked into: they won't get away with it."

Somewhat thus, surely, must some estimable readers have felt over the review of *THE GENUINE IN SHAKESPEARE* in the *Times Literary Supplement* (19/6/30). This disintegration business, which they might have hoped to see hushed up after the Academy lecture of the Chief Mandarin, years ago, keeps on obtruding itself. Only strenuous people can busy themselves with the arguments: can no one make an end of the trouble, as Bentley notoriously did with things in his time, or as Porson—or was it

Travis?—did (or did not) about Gibbon? For such inquirers, in the normal course of things, the review had the best authoritative touch: certitude without insolence, the distinct air of meeting argument with argument, even the grace of courtesy, so much more comforting than the manner of Mr. Bumble.

For Authority, in matters of the mental life, has learned something in the course of a century, and now cultivates the Bank-of-England manner, which has become so much more important and impressive than the Church-of-England manner—if, indeed, the latter still subsists. The Authority of to-day no longer brandishes the ferule: that is left to the men uneasy about their own position on the fence. Authority speaks neither in sorrow nor in anger, but in benignity, as a kind head-master controlling an erratically exploratory youth. Nothing could be more disarming than the *coup de chapeau* in the present case (*italics and small capitals ours*):

“No more than before are WE able to accept the *majority* of those conclusions; no less than before are WE anxious to express our sense of obligation to him for a work which, because it will *certainly* never meet with general acceptance, will probably fail to obtain the measure of critical recognition justly due to it. . . . Ignorance is certainly bliss; but it remains ignorance. Mr. Robertson's folly is the folly of wisdom.”

What could be more handsomely senatorial, so to speak? And what can the blushing protagonist do but render courtesy for courtesy, avowing: “This wisdom is the very wisdom of folly”? . . . And so,

salutes delivered, we engage. For, alas, reformed Authority still remains a little "unexercised and unbreathed," and still does its reasoning ill.

§ 2

It is indeed gracefully agile in bearing when it first takes to the foils, being only seemingly careless in the first passes, which amount to nothing. Citing the summary of the phenomena which bring scrutiny on the authorship of the description of Cleopatra in her barge in *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*, the reviewer thus adroitly presents to his readers the temerity of the disintegrator's negative conclusion :

"Accordingly the famous passage . . . goes to Chapman, or it may be Fletcher. (After all, there is a great difference between Chapman's verse manner and Fletcher's ; so that it does not conduce to confidence to find that the passage may be due to either of them). The conclusion seems to us preposterous. Yet it duly [!] follows from the premisses." [As if *these* indicated any one hand !] "The chief of these are that Shakespeare was *very slow* in adopting the double-ending, and that he never wrote predominantly end-stopped verse. Therefore the passage describing Cleopatra *cannot* be Shakespeare's. So Mr. Robertson argues."

The manner is all that could be desired. But the matter ! It is with a sigh that one remonstrates : Why that easy old trick of making the foil *slide* its point, pretending to be pinking ? For the impeached one had *not* said : "It must be either Chapman or Fletcher." Progressive criticism does not ape the

devices of Authority, and does not pretend to decide when the case for a decision is incomplete. The critic said in effect: "This seems to me very much the versification and the uneasily forced diction of Chapman. But another inquirer thinks it may be Fletcher. The matter is worth sifting." And Authority knew well enough that it had blandly garbled the issue, for when the facts are respectfully pointed out, It does not reply. Which does not "conduce to confidence."

Incidentally It has confused "the premisses." There would be no point *here* in noting that "Shakespeare was very slow in adopting the double-ending." At the stage of ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA he *had* accepted it. The relevant premiss cited is that "he never wrote predominantly end-stopped blank verse"—with or without double-endings. For the barge picture is so clogged with double-endings, alternating with lines eked out by "did's," that its out-and-out admirers must be partly rhythm-deaf. *That* is always our crux; and Authority, committed to convention, is not going to let itself be taken out of its mental depth by thoughts beyond the reaches of its ears.

The crux being duly evaded, Authority proceeds upon its purple way. "A critic of a different kind," it observes, "*would* begin with the premiss that the lines in question *must* be Shakespeare's, simply because we know of no one else who could have written them." And that brazen *petitio principii* really is the sole pretence of premiss or principle

we there learn that "she did lie," to borrow the words of the play, in fascinating positions, in her harbour, like Cleopatra in her pavilion :

He thought he saw the harbour's bosom *burn*,
Blazed with a fire wrought in a lady's form,
 Where *silver* passed the least . . .
 She lay, and seem'd a flood of diamant . . .
 She lay at length, like an immortal soul
 At endless rest in blest Elysium.

And we must not forget the previous sketch of

Her handmaids, bearing all things pleasure yields
 To such a service ;

for, though they do not seem to have "tended her i' the eyes," the poet was surely equal to making them "make their bends adornings," that last noun being very much in his taste. Furthermore, the intimation in the drama :

From the barge
 A strange *invisible* perfume *hits the sense*
 Of the adjacent *wharfs*,

would seem to be well within the scope of Chapman's physio-psychology,¹ seeing that odour is one of the

¹ Mr. Marley Denwood, who suggests Fletcher as the probable author of the barge passage, points me to

A delicate odour

As ever *hit my nostril*

in PERICLES (III, ii, 60-2), after "smells . . . in my sense." If, as is commonly agreed, ANTONY follows PERICLES in date, its "hit the sense" is an echo, in which view the Fletcher hypothesis remains so far unaffected. But, though Mr. Dugdale Sykes has made out a strong case for Wilkins's authorship of PERICLES, as well as for Shakespeare's revision and extensive re-writing of Acts III-V, he has not excluded the possibility that the Chapman clues, as well as Chapman's "Invective"

factors so richly expatiated on in the poem, the section *Olfactus* preceding that labelled *Visus*. And though he does not there definitely specify perfume as being (either normally or only on State occasions) at once invisible and percussive, he apparently so conceives it for poetic purposes :

And air, less corpulent in quality,
Than odours are, doth nourish vital spirits.
Therefore may they be proved of equal merits.

Yet further, an Authority studious of the past might have noted that even in the Variorum days Steevens had detected a note of Chapman in the "burnish'd throne" that "burn'd on the water," citing from his version of the *Odyssey* (X, 418-20. Cp. 461 sq.) :

In a throne she plac'd
My welcome person. Of a curious frame
'Twas, and so bright, I sat as in a flame.

Perhaps, indeed, a really studious Authority would recall that Warburton had traced the specification of the "pictur'd Venus" to Pliny, who, perhaps, was more likely to be known to Chapman than to Shakespeare. And, when all is said, bibliography is surely concerned to note how the scene as a whole

against his former friend Ben Jonson (apparently on the ground of Jonson's aspersion of *PERICLES* in the lump), point to a share by Chapman in a recast. Such a share, followed by a further revision on Shakespeare's part, appears to occur in *Antony* as well as in *MEASURE FOR MEASURE* and *ALL'S WELL*. The problem thus remains open. The fact that the "fringes of bright gold" in *PERICLES* (III, 11, 101) points in turn to the *TEMPEST* (I, 11, 408), which appears to involve Fletcher, heightens the complexity.

indicates some intrusion into the text at this point. As Monck Mason pointed out, the statement of Enobarbus that Cleopatra had first "pursued up" Antony's heart in that episode is in absolute conflict with his own description, which makes Antony absent! "A strange instance," Mason called it, "of negligence and inattention in Shakespeare." The modern bibliographer is now perhaps capable of the hypothesis that Shakespeare at least did not write both juxtaposed terms of the contradiction.

This is not the place for a detailed theory of the stage history of the play, which has not yet been attempted in *THE CANON*. But it may be well to guard against the possible inference that I regard Chapman as having been here allowed by the King's Men to interpolate a Shakespeare text. Not that that possibility is to be denied *à priori*; but that the inference from analogy would rather be: Chapman had revised an earlier *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*, and Shakespeare had largely rewritten that revision.

This procedure seems to me to have been followed in *ALL'S WELL* and *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*, which belong to the same period. It is indeed probable that the Interlude in the *TEMPEST* was added, for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth, by Chapman, being substituted for a simple "dance of spirits" which had previously stood in a play drafted or re-drafted by Fletcher. But the barge speech is on a different footing; and there and at various points in *ANTONY* we find dialogue and diction which, though not Shakespearean, tell rather of older

matter preserved than of new matter added. The barge speech would count as good matter for the actor.

On the other hand, if the Voice of Authority should insist that, apart from broken metre and flashy phrase and pounding rhythm, there is a "strange invisible" poetry about that beatific barge, we need not go far to find that Chapman *could* at a pinch write not only good verse but good poetry. As here :

Give me a spirit that on this life's rough sea
Loves t' have his sails filled with a lusty wind,
Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,
And his rapt ship run on her side so low
That she drinks water and her keel plows air.
There is no danger to a man that knows
What life and death is : there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge ; neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.
He goes before them, and commands them all,
That to himself is a law rational.

Byron's Conspiracy, Act III, end.

Nay, may we not "boldly say," as Wordsworth would put it, that if these lines had been found anywhere in the Folio, Authority would in its best senatorial manner decree that they *must* be Shakespeare's, because "we know of no one else who could have written them" ? For, quite honestly, Authority would not know. Knowledge, alas, is not its forte.

§ 3

Let us not, however, deny that Authority is still quite likely to carry its point with at least one reader, perhaps two, out of three, when it proclaims that

“An *induction* less influenced by a *priori* considerations would show that it is *highly probable* that at an early period Shakespeare used the double-ending with very great freedom.”

Still, should the readers include anyone who had learned any logic at “the more important universities,” that reader would be apt to gasp. For he would know that an opinion greatly “influenced by a *priori* considerations” is not an induction at all, but a dogma or a *petitio principii* falsely pretending to be an induction. Yet further, he would recognise that the enthymeme “it is highly probable” is here an *a priori* argument, and not an induction of any kind. It is distressing to have to point out those shortcomings of Authority, but in certain circumstances somebody surely ought to “bell the cat.” Authority must really learn that it “has a lith in its neck.”

If there are to be any rules in this game at all, we must firmly posit this: In the drawing of any inference as to Shakespeare’s actual practice with double-endings we are logically barred from standing on any alleged *à priori* probability whatever. There is *no* rationally cogitable *à priori* probability. We must make an induction, properly so called. And

that induction, in the nature of the case, must proceed at once on a chronological and on an æsthetic or technical scrutiny.

That is to say, we must first seek common ground as to the dating of the plays as being early or late, and then, for the purposes of *this* argument, confine ourselves to the evidence supplied by *indisputedly* early plays, as alone offering a safe ground. Now, there appears to be no dispute that the DREAM, I HENRY IV, and KING JOHN, are all "early"; and it is arithmetically certain that in all three the percentages of double-endings are low. Then, if at some isolated points we find in those plays a relatively high percentage in a speech or a scene, we may reasonably note the inferable "probability" that there has been a revision made when the author's general percentage had been raised or, as in the case of KING JOHN, that the first scene may have been drafted by another hand.

Thus there was no *à priori* consideration whatever behind the induction that Shakespeare began with low percentages, though his predecessors had visibly done it before him. And if we are to talk or think of probability at all, we may fairly say that, seeing the author of the DREAM makes exquisite use of the subtler and finer devices for averting monotony in the blank-verse line, there is not a shadow of likelihood that he would at the same period employ largely a device which in the hands of his corrivals was visibly adding a new monotony, after having been ostensibly resorted to for the sake of variation.

Furthermore, earliness is reasonably inferable in respect of a pervading diffuseness of diction, in view of the apparent fact that the diction of the plays in general attains in process of time to pregnancy and concision. As to this there may be said to be common consent. Accordingly, it is a fair induction to surmise that the opening scene of the COMEDY OF ERRORS is the earliest example of Shakespeare's blank verse that has been preserved. And in that scene, of which the verse-movement is utterly different from that of the second scene, the percentage of double-endings is at the very minimum for the period.

Then, when the Voice of Authority declares it to be "highly probable that at an early period Shakespeare used the double-ending with very great freedom," then avoided it as he learned his business, and then again cultivated it, we are listening to *Vox et præterea nihil*. As Authority itself concedes, ignorance in these matters is certainly bliss, but it remains ignorance. But on ignorance, unhappily, there follows impercipientia. "A more flexible criticism," says Authority, with regard to Antony's oration in JULIUS CÆSAR, "would maintain that the end-stopping is here manifestly deliberate, and was the device of a master." *Solvuntur tabulæ*.

The very use of the word "deliberate" is the mark of logical collapse, and the narrative is festively misleading. That "flexible criticism" had actually been suggested to the traditionists in THE SHAKESPEARE CANON, in the remark that in Antony's oration some

might see a deliberate choice to employ a staccato form. Authority really ought not to pose as originating an idea which, though probably long ago enunciated, it has borrowed from the culprit on trial. On the other hand, the fact that in the speech of Othello before the Senate there is no such staccato verse was indicated as a counter-consideration; and neither on that nor on any of the rest of the argument has our Authority anything to say.

But the significant point here is that the term "deliberate" must be applicable to the barge passage in *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA* no less than to the oration in *JULIUS CÆSAR*. *Of course* the verse-form of the oration was deliberate, whether it was penned by Shakespeare or by anyone else. And equally of course the style of the barge description must have been deliberate, the more so if it were Shakespeare's, because it is a jarring departure from his then normal style.

Our thesis is that the deliberation is that of a poet whose sense of rhythm was dull. And the critic who, by implication, calls all *that* end-stopped and end-stressed verse "the work of a master" is merely indicating that he either cannot or will not consider what makes blank verse, as such, good or bad. If he *will* reduce the issue to an opportunity for blank asseveration, argument is over, and we can but suggest some course of training in the mechanics and æsthetics of verse, as latterly studied.

§ 4

We are very much at the same point in dealing with the Voice on the question of THE TWO GENTLEMEN.

"To what strange expedients the employment of a rigid canon of Shakespeare's verse-development compels Mr. Robertson," writes the oracle, "his treatment of THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA may serve as example. The *fact* that it is *incomparably* better than *anything* that has come down to us associated with the name of Greene is tacitly ignored."

Here again, it is to be feared, the reader who has any notion of logic may reflect that the æsthetic proposition put as a *fact* is a flat *petitio principii*, affirming an unquestionable one of the main matters in dispute! And we might add that the phrase "tacitly ignored," implying, if anything, that the question of the comparative literary merits has not been faced by the offending inquirer, incurs the reproach of sheer false witness. For the quality of Greene's work in his accepted plays had been rather fully discussed in THE CANON; and the alleged transcendent superiority of the versification and other elements of THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA to anything of his had been negated in detail, in advance, by a comparison of examples—a thing never attempted by our Authority.

Protesting that the characterisation of a sample of "iambic tic-tac" in the play as non-Shakespearean is only an *ipse dixit*, he proceeds to affirm,

on the contrary, that "one of the first steps in critical knowledge is to realise that there is *not a tittle of evidence*, internal or external, that anyone but Shakespeare wrote it." It would evidently be idle to appeal on the point to the critical conscience of our Authority, who must be held to be constitutionally impervious to all internal evidence; but it may be expedient to point out to others that the evidence actually tendered consisted in

1. A multitude of tags and phrases, common in Greene, and not otherwise traceable in the Folio;

2. A series of *gnomai*, also specially traced to him;

3. A close parallelism between the comic types and the comic dialogue in JAMES IV and our play;

4. The parallel between the treacheries of James and Proteus, and their characterisation of their basenesses as "errors"; with a Greenean condonation in both cases;

5. A pervading coincidence of "once-used words" in THE TWO GENTLEMEN with the vocabulary of Greene;

6. An overwhelming homology of stressed and monotonous iambic versification between our play and Greene's accepted work, as well as his work in the Countess scenes of EDWARD III.

On this last head, it is interesting to note how our Authority "tacitly ignores" the whole question of the identities of versification. Seeking to repel the rational inference from the opening scene of the ERRORS, he argues that "as far as we can tell, great poets do not begin by writing in a completely

individual verse style," and he grounds himself on the case of Keats. But Keats's first verse, to begin with, was written in his 'teens ; and Shakespeare in 1592 was 28 years old. To assume or imply that Shakespeare had never written any verse before the age of 28 is so gross an extravagance that it must be set down to a purpose of special pleading.

But, furthermore, only the most reckless special pleading could inspire the assertion that Keats "demonstrably began by writing verses that are indistinguishable from those of any poetaster of his time." This, implicitly alleged of the *verse movement* in question, is outrageously false. It is astonishing that, even in the present stage of prosodic science, such an assertion can be made, without scandal, in a leading literary journal. The verses indicated in the volume of 1817 as written before "the rest" *have* Keats's pulsation ; and the critic who will undertake to match it in any poetaster of the time is but parading ignorance in the guise of knowledge. If he tries to save himself by merely claiming that there is notably inferior *matter* in Keats's earlier work, he will but be adding chicane to sciolism. There is some notably inferior matter in Keats's *later* literary work.

In this connection, our Authority has strangely alleged : "Mr. Robertson *insists* that Shakespeare *as soon as he began writing*, began in a completely individual style of his own." This is of course pure delusion. As was pointed out in the SUPPLEMENT, in a letter which elicited no reply, the scene in the

ERRORS was indicated as the earliest in style that has *been preserved*, and that we do not know how Shakespeare "began" to write. Thus the oracle has indefensibly ascribed to me his own strange fantasy. My thesis is that what is recognisably the earliest blank-verse by Shakespeare in the Folio is written in a completely individual verse style.

And now let the reader observe how Authority impeaches itself in this connection. On the line of reasoning which we have been analysing, the two GENTLEMEN must be earlier than the first scene of the ERRORS, howsoever we may date the latter play as a whole. But even if we leave that issue open, we find Authority putting the DREAM immediately after the GENTLEMEN. Then the DREAM, in which the poet so obviously recoils from the Greenean blank-verse of the GENTLEMEN, represents his attainment, *in one year* (that is, if we date the DREAM 1594), of sudden mastery of his "incomparably subtle instrument" in that particular regard.

Such a conception of sudden and complete reconstruction of a poet's entire rhythmic psychology appears to me so utterly incongruous with Authority's own conception of a poet's early progression that I am content to leave it to dispose of itself. There is absolutely no such somersault in the *rhythmic* evolution of Keats. As against the blind dogma, there has been offered a reasoned explanation of the GENTLEMEN as another man's play, of which Shakespeare has rewritten the first scene-section, and some others. That thesis at least

coheres. The postulates of Authority in this business are an alternation of "demonstrably" false literary history and theoretic nonsense.

§ 5

It has but to be added that, whereas our Authority denies the existence of external as well as of internal grounds for ascribing the GENTLEMEN to Greene, there is really a very strong presumption, from external testimony, that some work of Greene's was after his death credited to Shakespeare. No plausible explanation, apart from such a theory as ours, has ever been offered of Brabine's very explicit protest, in 1594, that

The men that so eclipsed his fame
Purloined his plumes : can they deny the same ?

It is evident, from this testimony and from Nashe's and Chettle's, that Greene had written a great many comedies, at least some of which had been successful. What became of them ? And what became of the play that Nashe "lastlie" wrote with Greene ? Authority does not ask these things, but common sense does. When then we find in the GENTLEMEN a score of salient marks of Greene's workmanship, in a visibly Greenean structure, we have an "external" evidence corroborating the internal.

It is true that, as was carefully set forth in the CANON, the defence might found on the quantity of double-endings in our play and their scarcity in his preserved and assigned plays. Here again Authority

is using an argument that had been proffered to it. But the case for his authorship remains perfectly reasonable. It is not the fact that, as our Authority alleges, double-endings are practically absent from Greene's assigned work. They begin to emerge, at points, even in JAMES IV, alongside of the reversion to rhyme; and they become noticeably numerous in GEORGE-A-GREENE. And, it may be added, they rise to 12 per cent in the Countess scenes of EDWARD III.

If, then, Authority and its clientèle will make the effort to realise what was happening with the double-ending in general, they will see that a recourse to it by Greene was "highly probable." Marlowe had begun with a low percentage; Kyd with a still lower one. By 1591, Marlowe had greatly increased his rate, and Kyd had followed suit. (The data have been set forth repeatedly.) Greene, for his part, had begun by hotly repugning the blank-verse fashion. Then he swung round, to show (in ALPHONSUS OF ARRAGON) how easily the thing could be done. Then he followed the prevailing mode.

At first, with his congenital classic proclivity, implicit in his love of the rhymed couplet, he has very few double-endings. But both the new fashion and the impulse to variety which had motived it would operate on him as on the others. The really unlikely thing would be that he should *not* resort more freely to the double-ending. Furthermore, he had written comedies which are lost—comedies some of which "probably" underlie some in the Folio. We are not then suggesting any sudden or strange

development on his part. He would increase his rate just as the others had done before him, having, in fact, sore need of any device to diversify monotony.

When, then, we suggest that the GENTLEMEN was probably that "lastlie writ" comedy referred to in the GROATSWORTH OF WIT, we are following the most obviously probable line of inference. It is no great thing at best, as has often been noted. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has been fain to confess that its weaknesses suggest an earlier play, adapted by Shakespeare; and Mr. Dover Wilson has acknowledged the poverty of the clowning of Speed. That is in point of fact poor in the very fashion of the clowning in JAMES IV. On the other hand, it is a strange æsthetic taste which cannot see the superiority of feminine characterisation in Margaret of Freshingfield and Queen Dorothea over Julia and Sylvia in the GENTLEMEN, though these last are quite Greenean in their way.

But even if the GENTLEMEN *had* in any way surpassed Greene's previous assigned work, there would have been nothing in the fact repugnant to the theory that it is his last play. He had apparently gathered up his powers, not long before, in the Countess scenes, reaching the best of many performances on that special theme. *All* the playwrights of his group had shown an unquestionable development in their craft. To argue that *he* cannot have improved, then, would be a *petitio principii* possible only to Authority.

In the present instance, as we have seen, the fallacy is quite gratuitous. Plot apart (and Greene

ranked high, for Nashe, as a plotter) there are some stronger elements, and some much better poetry, in JAMES IV than in Greene's part of the GENTLEMEN.

§ 6

It is the more noteworthy that our Authority finally blenches somewhat before the traditionary task of showing that when Shakespeare called the VENUS the "first heir of his invention" he meant anything in general and nothing in particular. With Alan Breck, one must avow that there are "spunks of decency" at work. Authority now argues that even if the poet's own testimony carried its natural meaning,

"it does not conflict with the ascription of various earlier plays to him by Heminge and Condell. They would be *perfectly justified* in including any plays in which his hand had been *preponderant or decisive*. . . . For not even the most conservative critic maintains that Shakespeare wrote *every single word* that is in the Folio."

And yet he must be reckoned "preponderant and decisive" in TITUS ANDRONICUS! That should indeed gratify Mr. Peter Alexander and Professor A. W. Pollard; but it may make Mr. John Bailey, and even more judicious persons, grieve, as it would have the late Professor Dowden, of judicious memory. There is, of course, no attempt on the part of Authority to face either the internal or the external evidence against the ascription of that dramatic monstrosity to the author of the DREAM, with the verdict that he wrote the two plays within a year.

And, equally of course, when men seeking authority can so conceive things, believing themselves to believe that the verse movements of TITUS were schemed by the same nervous system as produced those of the DREAM, it is idle to debate with them. Conscious of their "saner critical attitude," they will hold securely to the skirts of Ptolemy, taking vigilant care not to let Copernicanism go too far. "The more closely we study the Folio text," says our monitor, deep in the recollection of those rhythms, "the less plausible become Mr. Robertson's contentions." So be it. All that can be usefully done is to put some restraint upon their liberty of misrepresentation.

As, for instance, when our benign Authority painedly proclaims that "there is a wide and unbridgable gulf between" his memorable concession that Shakespeare did not write "every single word that is in the Folio," and "Mr. Robertson's view that *Shakespeare wrote exceedingly little* of what is in the Folio." In view of his rhythmic, it would be hazardous to assume that our Authority shares our arithmetical convictions; so let us not challenge him to a count. But let us just compare his specification, "exceedingly little," with the sentence which follows:

"It would be interesting to reckon up how much he does allow to Shakespeare—at a rough guess, something less than a half."

So that something less than half of 862 folio pages is "exceedingly little." It is nevertheless to be

recorded that when the extensive discrepancy between the two propositions was pointed out to our Authority he did not attempt to maintain their identity. The present writer, then, may finally have done something to earn the magnanimous testimony of Authority, that "critical candour must acknowledge that Mr. Robertson had done more than any contemporary critic of Shakespeare to increase our awareness of the nature and extent of the problems for which some solution must be found."

If only our spiritually be-wigged Authority could bestir itself to *do* something to solve the problems in question, instead of saying and unsaying things as above, and so proceeding, Janus-wise, to make out that there are really no problems to solve, our parting acknowledgment might be a little more effusive. For some of us, when all is said, Truth remains one of the most important things in a preposterous and sorrowful world. But what makes the world look most preposterous, if not most sorrowful (the preposterous having its humorous side), is that so few men care enough about truth to take for it half the trouble they bestow on their play.

And perhaps the very worst of it is that, after listening, with wistful hope, to the Voice of Authority, they are scientifically quite justified in preferring to listen to Mr. George Robey, who makes the preposterous delightful.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

IT may be in some small degree serviceable to present a bald summary of the various critical (or uncritical) positions dealt with in the foregoing pages. A reader may have a difficulty in seeing how they relate, or group, and may imperfectly realise, in consequence, the trend of the conflict as a whole. He *has* realised, it is to be hoped, that the critical method here defended proceeds upon *all* the data—historical, bibliographical and æsthetic—in regard to the Shakespeare Folio. The various attitudes of resistance to that method, then, may be thus curtly specified :

ACADEMIC TRADITIONALISM

(Mr. Peter Alexander, Prof. A. W. Pollard and Prof. L. Abercrombie)

“ No internal evidence can ever prove anything as to real authorship. The only guide is the voucher of the title-page. You must therefore believe in Heminge and Condell, at whatever cost to your critical reason. Shakespeare certainly wrote even TITUS ANDRONICUS.” (Which is critical unreason, inspired by sheer Foliolatry, and backed either by

conscious impotence or by impotent arrogance pretending to reason.)

CRITICAL SOLIPSISM

(a) (Prof. Abercrombie)

"There can be no 'æsthetic criticism' of Shakespeare unless, like me, you believe that he either wrote the whole Folio or is 'responsible' for it. He made himself responsible for the whole of every play he modified or revised in the slightest degree. Anyhow, Heminge and Condell make him responsible. Æsthetic criticism consists in saying 'fine' or 'wretched,' just as you happen to be impressed."

[To which we should add (b) the recent pronouncement of Sir E. K. Chambers: "I am prepared to accept some very poor work as Shakespeare's." It is only fair to show that Professor Abercrombie has some distinguished support. The dogmatic upshot is this: "Shakespeare *must not* be disintegrated. But he *must* be denigrated, in order to save the complexities of the Mandarins."]

ANONYMOUS AUTHORITY

1. Article A in *Times Literary Supplement*)

"You can never reconcile the conflict of judgments. Let us then muddle on. Fight a delaying action. Abuse plaintiff's attorney."

2. (Article B in the same periodical)

"You will never find general acceptance for dis-

integrating views. Sane criticism is that to which most of us assent. You are actually denying to Shakespeare beautiful passages that only he could have written." (Which conflicts painfully with the charge of Mr. John Bailey.)

MR. JOHN BAILEY

"You insanelly suppose that Shakespeare can be always at his best. Therefore you cast out all that is *not* of the best. Which is fatuous." (It would indeed be just as fatuous as the charge, the very wording of which is an intellectual fiasco: as who should say, "You think every step an athlete takes must be his longest; and that an eagle must always be at its highest flight.") "Shakespeare only 'substantially' wrote the Folio. No competent student now believes him to have written TITUS ANDRONICUS." (Mutiny against Academic Authority, as represented by Professors A. W. Pollard and Lascelles Abercrombie, with Mr. Peter Alexander.)

PROFESSOR LEGOUIS (furiously reinforced, latterly,
by PROFESSOR DOVER WILSON)

"You have framed for yourself an ideal Shakespeare. Your critical principle is the mere rejection of what falls below your ideal." (The Professor has formed a speculative ideal of his own, in terms of which Shakespeare was a drunkard in his youth. For this there is no evidence worthy of the name; and the actual evidence is all the other way. In point of

fact the alleged critical "ideal" of Shakespeare proceeds on no presupposition whatever, but on an inductive study of the styles in the Folio, save in so far as the corollary as to his moral cast may be held to rest upon the æsthetic induction.)

DIVERSITY OF VIEW ON THE MORAL ASPECT

As to the extreme moral elasticity of Shakespeare there seems to be a broad agreement between Sir E. K. Chambers, Professor Abercrombie and Professor Dover Wilson, Professor A. W. Pollard (so far) wistfully dissenting. (Professor Legouis thinks the ageing Shakespeare keenly repented his youthful inebriety, finding that it had affected his health !)

DIVERSITY OF VIEW ON INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Certain esteemed American academics (Professors Parrott and Tucker Brooke, and Dr. Allison Gaw) have somehow reached the conclusion that Shakespeare was the first to multiply double-endings. This is demonstrably opposed to the whole evidence. Making the false assumption, they naturally reach false ascriptions when they try to discriminate hands in the Folio. And their conflicting views, the outcome of an unscientific method, are held to discredit a more scientific mode of induction.

EDITORIAL DISCRETION

This, as represented by Professor Dover Wilson, appears to proceed on some such view as the follow-

ing: "You can claim to apply constantly the test of bibliography, with a minimum of suggestion that either old or revisory matter is non-Shakespearean. Thus, like Michael Angelo dropping dust and chips while he pretended to chisel, you may satisfy the moderately critical student without alienating Authority, and may even function in the latter capacity. You can at the same time try to trip up or otherwise discredit the avowed disintegrator, and so shield your own status. You may even go the length of explicit self-contradiction, relying on the inattention of Authority and its flock. A co-editor, facing both ways, helps."

GENERAL AGNOSTICISM AS TO VERSE DIFFERENCES

A few scattered scholars (not above dealt with, lest they should be compromised) have recognised that there is a deep artistic differentiation between typically Shakespearean versification and that of the pre-Shakespeareans and most of the later dramatists. It would be difficult to say how far they carry the inference.

Broadly speaking, all the combatants above dealt with appear to recognise no significant æsthetic difference between linear and free-rhythm'd blank verse as such—that is to say, between the verse of Shakespeare and Milton on the one hand, and that of Greene, Peele, Kyd, Marlowe, Chapman, etc., on the other. As this means identity of pleasure in the end-stopped and the solute versification, the orthodox

defence, in all its aspects, may be described as rhythm-deaf. And there, probably, lies the centre of the resistance.

ACADEMIC INCONSISTENCY

That there is nevertheless much inconsistency on the subject is made clear by the fact that hardly any combatant now appears to deny a dual authorship of HENRY VIII. The ground for that abstention would seem to be an uneasy recognition of the force of the case made out last century, by *Analysis of Versification*, for the presence of Fletcher in the play. No other argument would seem to be able to count with the traditionalists. Thus they are divided against themselves—unless Mr. Peter Alexander can rouse them to a bold orthodoxy.

AVERAGE ORTHODOXY

Something might be added on the mental attitude or attitudes emerging in the general mass of journalistic criticism, anonymous and other. It has in some cases what we may describe as the usual unimpressive quality of newspaper "noticing," though on the other hand not a little of the more pretentious polemic above dealt with partakes of the nature and inspiration of catchpenny journalism. A common feature is the resort of the reviewer to unashamed subjectivism. Thus an "old hand" will fill columns with prattle, in this connection, about *himself*, considered as an æsthetic phenomenon.

174 THE CRITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL

Yet (apart even from a number of generous commendations, for which one cannot be too grateful, but which must not be taken as always connoting agreement) there emerge also a significant number of candid and intelligent reactions to the argument; and an anonymous journalist will now and then exhibit a perception of the nature of the logical problem that does not appear to be attained by the polemical academics.¹ Some are even contemptuous of the orthodox nescience, and (perhaps youthfully) optimistic as to the general progress made. Thus there appears to be small security for the supernal certitudes of Authority as to the permanence of its dominion.

¹ I ought to recognise, however, the indignant denunciation, by Mr Ivor Brown, of my remark that upon a recent revival of CYMBELINE, it was flouted "even by journalists, one pronouncing it a silly play." The meaning of this has been totally missed by the wrathful Mr Brown. The point is that journalists are normally respectful towards all Shakespeare; but that over that play even some journalists are recalcitrant. Mr. Brown's tearful cry that "from Hazlitt to Walkley and Montague . . . journalists have written about Shakespeare with a sympathy and insight far beyond Mr. Robertson's possession," is a truly exquisite *malentendu*. As an old journalist, I never for a moment supposed that journalism *need* ever reduce a critic to the intellectual condition here exhibited by Mr. Brown. As an interpreter, I should say, he stands alone in the profession.

CHAPTER IX

SUGGESTIONS

§ 1. *Traditionism and Æsthetic Education*

IT is reasonably to be urged, then, that serious students should collectedly face the whole problem as now presented. Our whole conception of Shakespeare's mind, character, culture and evolution is involved in the scientific investigation of the authorship of the plays; and according as we are critical or traditionary we are with or without reasons for our estimate.

Thus when Dr. Budd, ignoring all the issues as to the stage history of *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*, carefully proves, in a paper read to the Shakespeare Association, that it exhibits knowledge of the Italian source which is not conveyed by the old *PROMOS AND CASSANDRA*, he is at once forcing an open door so far as the "disintegrators" are concerned and confirming the uncritical multitude in an unwarranted pre-supposition. He takes it for granted, that is to say, that Shakespeare *must* have read Italian because he *must* have written the whole of *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*.

Mixed authorship having been expressly affirmed, it is mere reasoning in a circle, in that regard, to

impute to Shakespeare an acquaintance with Italian. On a general survey of the plays, there is no warrant whatever for assuming that Shakespeare read Italian. Even the assumption that he read French has served to saddle him with the authorship of some of the most trivially poor work in HENRY V, which cries aloud against the ascription.

No conception of him thus hampered and disguised by spurious attributes can have any critical value. And the fact that prominent writers have no hesitation in ascribing to him amoralities and basenesses which would to-day place him outside the sympathy of good hearts is a sufficient testimony to the paralysing effects of a heedlessly accepted tradition on even instructed minds. Tradition, in fact, is miseducation, here as in so many other fields.

Furthermore, it cannot be too strongly declared that the reign of active Foliolatry is a heavy hindrance to all æsthetic appreciation of Shakespearean blank verse. Never, probably, have half its readers perceived its immense superiority as a prosodic achievement, simply because their appreciation of all verse is in terms of a metre and not of a rhythm. Perceiving no difference, they spontaneously refuse to think that it may exist.

There is nothing to show, in critical literature, that in the age of James, which sets out with Daniel's Defence of Rhyme against Campion, men of his school perceived the appeal of great blank verse, or that Campion's school, in turn, saw the greatness of the rhythm of Shakespeare. Evidently there was

thus far no vision of a new possession. Milton is almost the first to indicate the perception of what has been achieved. For all we know, Marlowe had made the stronger impression in point of sheer versification, precisely because his verse was linear. Jonson's praise of Shakespeare notes the other's mighty line, but not Shakespeare's winged rhythm.

Now, we cannot claim to know how far a "sense of rhythm" can be imparted to one who has not developed it. In some cases it is probably inachievable. But we do know that the perception of the subtle charm of colour may be acquired where it had been latent; and, at least, no competent educator who realises the æsthetic ministry of rhythm in verse will take for granted that it is indemonstrable or incommunicable to the young student. It is surely the first and the final duty of the educator to attempt the communication of every form of knowledge with which he is concerned.

If, then, I am at all near the truth in affirming that a "knowledgable" possession of the secret of rhythm is still far from general among the students of English literature—as it has been often declared by French critics to be among those of French poetry—it is fair to infer that the backwardness in question is maintained among us by the blind acceptance of a Canon which puts on one level, and under one ægis, verse that is relatively mechanical and verse that, as such, is consummate, shrouding the anomaly by panegyric of what is most forceful

in the former, with no notation of the organic difference.

The inane cliché about the artist being "not always at his best" is thus made a mere obstruction to knowing wherein his art, at all its levels, consists. It might seem inconceivable that men schooled in the whole matter should be actually unaware that they are ever dealing with organic differences at all. But such is the inference forced on the inquirer who, perceiving the æsthetic facts, examines the whole debate.

If then, as there seem to be grounds for thinking, we are in a period of mental decadence, with a forward current only in physical science, it may be that the fighting of the delaying action so congenial to Authority may leave æsthetic culture stranded on a "bank and shoal of time." One observes that professional æsthetes, conscious of *expertise*, who deny "sensibility" to all who do not share their inexpensive literary orthodoxies, are often as visibly atrophied on the side of the verse-sense as the official guardians of tradition. They are kept akin, indeed, by the "superiority complex," the authoritarian temper, commonest of academic fatuities, though aped by most labour leaders.

Still, there is a visible chance that essentially unintelligent judgments will in time come under critical judgment,, and that a decade or two hence it will be matter of astonishment for instructed men that gowned authorities in our day should gravely have made submission to the decree that Shake-

sppeare wrote, about the same time, the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and the whole blank verse of TITUS ANDRONICUS, in which there is not one Shakespearean period.

Prosodic science is really not dead, though ostensibly much affected by sleep. Long ago an academic perceived and said that the first line of PARADISE LOST,

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit,
could not be scanned by the academic rules which dictated the scansion :

Ŏf mān's first dīs-ŏbēdiēnce ānd thē frūit ;

and within the generation it was perceived that the scansion *must* be :

Ŏf mān's first dīsŏbēdiēnce ānd thē frūit,

the corollary being that in the very first line of his epic Milton was calmly challenging the whole current prosody, which knew not rhythm.

Still, despite Bridges, the recognition of the true law of versification was far from general. Some twenty years ago, an examiner who had studied the subject propounded to five assistant examiners the problem of the scansion of a certain Miltonic line, and the whole five assistant examiners, in their response, varied from each other, and from the examiner-in-chief. Now, we all know that there are some *crucies* in Miltonic scansion, over which there may be reasonable debate ; but it seems fairly

clear that those five assistant examiners had not given much thought to the prosody of a great classic, with which they were actively concerned as educationists.

§ 2. *Traditionism and Text-Corruption*

Lest some reader should miss the educational significance of the case for lack of concrete illustrations, I will submit a few. In the course of the investigation entitled THE SHAKESPEARE CANON, I have from time to time, quite incidentally, pointed out how the text of the Folio or of modern editions has been damaged either by the original printers or correctors or by later editors.

For instance, (1) a well-known passage in RICHARD II (II, i, 12-14) is habitually punctuated and read thus (*italics ours*) :

The setting sun, and music at the close,
As the *last* taste of sweets *is sweetest last*,
Writ in remembrance more than things long past :

—putting “ writ ” entirely out of syntactic construction, and emptying the italicised words of meaning. Obviously, the absurdly pleonastic “ is sweetest last ” was not written with the purport here conveyed ; the meaning was and is :

— As the last taste of sweets is sweetest—last
Writ in remembrance. . . .

Last is a verb (=endure), not an adverb ; and only the habit of *looking* for line-endedness in verse could have made it possible for so many editors to make

"printer's pie" of the passage. But their treatment of the passage is in every respect open to censure. They mostly follow the punctuation of the Folio, but say nothing of its text, though the first line cited reads there: "musicke is the close," of which the justifiable emendation would be "in the close" (the reading of Theobald), not "at the close," though that is the reading of the Quarto of 1597 Mr. Ivor B. John's "Arden" edition, where we look for such information, does not give it; neither does the Porter-Clarke-Collins reprint of the Folio.

What Mr. John does tell is that Vaughan proposed to read line 14 (*writ . . . past*) after line 11, complaining that as it stands it is "balderdash." To which Mr. John firmly replies: "There is no difficulty, however, in understanding an absolute construction, *writ*= *being writ*"—a vain violence that is presumably committed by editors and readers in general. But no recent edition, so far as I have observed, notes that a sounder solution was propounded nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, and adopted by Knight in various editions.

When I proposed the obvious correction of the punctuation, I was unaware (*a*) that it had been proposed by Monck Mason in 1785,¹ and (*b*) that, though ignored by the Variorum men, it had been embodied in Knight's PICTORIAL SHAKESPEARE (1838-41), where the lines read:

(As the last taste of sweets is sweetest) last,
Writ in remembrance, . . .

¹ *Comments on the Last Edition of Shakespeare's Plays*, 1785, p. 164.

Many readers must have assented, but editors were not so teachable.² Knight, indeed, had hardly earned authority as a textual critic; but the Authority which ignored that simple emendation had still less claim to deference. Other instances of perpetuated error suggest that the supposed higher correctitude of modern editing of Shakespeare is a matter rather of adherence to the old texts than of thoughtful study of them.

(2) An instance outside the Shakespeare text may serve to indicate how, all over the field, the lack of rhythmic and even metrical perception affects editions of Elizabethan dramatists. Eleven years ago I pointed out that, whether or not Jonson read his proofs, a crass printer's error had been committed in *SEJANUS* (I, i, 219) and passed by all editors, so far as I knew, down to that date. The text runs, from the 1616 Folio onwards:

His smile is more than e'er yet poets feigned
Of bliss, and shades, nectar—
Air. A serving boy!

Sense and metre are here alike impossible; yet no editor appears to have ventured a correction. That Jonson must—"must," by induction, not *à priori*—have written "Hebe's nectar" will probably not be disputed by any student, even if he does not pause to note that the misreading of the letter H in script,

² A. J. Butler wrote, in *D.N.B.*, that "no future editor can afford to neglect" the *Pictorial*. They have, however, in general done so. (I am not sure as to whether the emendation before us was made in the *first* edition.)

as *Sh*, was easy. But what is to be said of the æsthetic sense of the series of scholarly editors who have left standing, for three centuries, so glaring a misprint? In a prose classic, it could not have passed any educated press corrector. Only some inhibition of the literary sense, affecting alike comprehension and ear for metre, can account for it; and the inference carries with it the surmise that æsthetic culture, in respect of the study of verse, has been much neglected.

(3) In KING LEAR (IV, vii, 61) a pathetically simple line has been, by the diligence of a blundering corrector of the Folio text, made at once badly immetrical and extremely absurd, thus:—

Fourscore and upward, not an hour *more or less*.

As has been justly observed by Dr. McKerrow, many plain errors in the text are the work of would-be correctors who did not know either the scansion or the idiom of passages which were perfectly right as they stood. This has happened here. The line must originally have stood:

Fourscore and upward, not an hour less

—the word “hour” being here a dissyllable, as so often elsewhere in Shakespeare and in other Elizabethan poets. So read, the line is pathetically right, the aged Lear thinking of the “fourscore,” not of the “upward,” when he says “not an hour less.” But when he is made to say “not an hour *more*” than fourscore *and upward*, the line is ruined (since

no one could possibly so phrase), and merely limps to its destruction.

What has evidently happened is the emergence of a Jacobean reviser!¹ for whom "hour" has ceased to be a possible dissyllable, and who feels he must somehow eke out a line that is short by a syllable. And the editors have let him have his way, and follow in his evil footsteps, *because they have not been trained to any sense of rhythm*, or even to any vigilant knowledge of Elizabethan metrical usage, to say nothing of their inapprehension of the sense.

(4) And now, to show to what lengths of fresh divagation the professional academic can go, Professor Dover Wilson, in an article in the *Modern Language Review*² on "Thirteen Volumes of Shakespeare: a Retrospect," achieves the most distressing of all the false emendations ever made. And this by force of the same æsthetic miseducation.

In the Folio text of HAMLET (I, iii, 64-65) we have the lines :

But do not dull thy palm with entertainment

Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade. Beware . . .

The First and Second Quartos have "courage" for "comrade," but that reading has justly been discarded for the other. When the lines are exactly printed after the Folio (as in Craig's edition), the reader may be supposed to realise that Shakespeare used the pronunciation "comrade" as in I HENRY IV

¹ *Query*, Scotch? In Scots, the word is sounded "oor," following Fr. *heure*.

² Vol. XXV, No. 4; October, 1930.

(IV, i, 96), though in LEAR (II, iv, 213) he has "*comrade*." But so little is the former fact realised that in the Globe edition the second line runs :

Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware . . .
By the usage of that edition, then, we are to scan the second adjective "unfledgéd," which makes a gratuitously immetrical line whether we read *comrade* or *comrade*, but especially when we read "*comrade*." And so we must stumble in the Clarendon Press and Cambridge University Press editions, and in Dowden's "Arden," where the editors unintelligibly retain the "unfledgéd" even when explaining, in the notes, that we must read "*comrade*," as in I HENRY IV.

And now enters Mr. Dover Wilson, with the ostentatiously penitent avowal (a) that for years he confidently stood to his unspeakable emendation of "cockney" for "comrade" (holding that cockney = cock's egg, and is thus "finely [!] fitted with 'new-hatch'd, unfledg'd'"), but that (b) he has since learned from the N.E.D.,¹ to his shame, that there are "well-authenticated examples" of "courage" being used, "in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to indicate persons, much as we now speak of 'sparks' or 'braves'." Accordingly, writes Mr. Wilson (c) "the reading of the [HAMLET] Quartos is completely vindicated,² and my 'ignorance and conceit' are alike humbled in the dust."

¹ The point was handled by Dowden in 1899 !

² It is only fair to note that Mr. Wilson may here claim to have set aside the authority of the Folio.

Mr. Wilson's conversion, all the same, is as ill-inspired as his original sin. The fact that "courage" is used for a person in Hoby is no reason for supposing that Shakespeare would so employ it once and once only. Certainly the Quartos often have the better readings; but in this case the sound inference is just that Q1 was wrong and that Q2 at this point copied it. "Comrade," pronounced *comrade*, gives us precisely the scansion which the line needs, and "courage" *does not*, unless Mr. Wilson takes it for granted that *that* word was meant to have the old Chaucerian pronunciation "courage," a thing for which there is no warrant in the Folio.

That is to say, both his abortive original emendation and his acclaimed substitution are *metrically wrong*, as well as devoid of fitness of purport. And thus once more, in his case as in others, do we find the text corrupted by force of the general impercipience of rhythm even among academics. What Mr. Wilson's text of HAMLET will become, on the principle of adopting every Quarto reading for which there can be found an ostensible lexicographical justification, in disregard of all considerations of metre, is a disquieting theme for speculation.

Will he find authority in N.E.D. for accepting the "ceremonies" of Q1 as against the "cerements" of Q2 and the Folio (I, iv, 48); or the "beckles" of Q1 against the "bettles" of Q2 or the "beetles" of the Folio (71); or (following Halliwell-Phillipps) "the son of the [a] dear murdered" of Q2 and Folio as against the "son of a dear father murder'd" of

Q4 ; or the " stallyon " of Q2 against the " scullion " of the Folio (II, ii, 606) or the Quarto reading " despised love " against the " dispriz'd " of the Folio (III, i) ?

The reader is by this time, perhaps, prepared to believe that it is not a merely presumptuous mood that inspires the motion : " (a) Cultural perception of the nature and greatness of Shakespeare's versification is still far from being widely possessed ; (b) the acquirement of it is largely barred by the tactics of an Authority which merely fights a delaying action over all the problems of the authorship of the Folio ; (c) the active study of these will mean an effective stimulation of æsthetic education in this field." And we might add the rider : " In the critical process, there may well be advance in the recognition of the prosodic mystery and mastery of Milton, who is still, perhaps, for most of his countrymen a sealed book, dully counted dead æsthetically no less than doctrinally."

§ 3

So far, our appeal is made to the conscience of the educationist who is concerned to see æsthetic literature, and poetry in particular, studied with æsthetic intelligence. But there is another consideration which, if urged upon a wider audience, will surely not be ignored by the true educationist, whatever may be the attitude of the traditionist academics. To

say nothing, here, of the problem of the disutility of some of the historical plays in the Folio as means of interesting or instructing pupils in English history, there arises a rather important question as to their ethics.

One of the most striking experiences of the æsthetic investigator of the historical plays is that almost nowhere is non-Shakespearean versification and diction more obvious as such than in scenes and speeches where the moral sense is repelled by a crude brutality in the thought and feeling they embody. One says, "almost nowhere," because there are some notable exceptions. It is not true, as Professor Wilson and some others idly assert, that it is only "bloody" or "illiberal" diction or motivation that has been indicated in THE SHAKESPEARE CANON as non-Shakespearean. We have just been dealing with the diametrically opposite charge that Shakespeare is there denied the authorship of matter so fine that no one else could have written it.

In the first volume of THE CANON, the diction, purport, style and versification of Clarence's Dream in RICHARD III were shown to be markedly Marlovian, though that piece is of high poetic as distinct from dramatic repute; and similarly, at various points, the brilliant Roses Scene, so often claimed as Shakespearean, has been assigned to Marlowe. In a later volume, the epithalamium of Juliet is, on the same coincidence of morphological and stylistic grounds, found to be Marlovian—this to the distinct dissatisfaction of some students not blindly devoted

to the authority of the Folio. The speech is commonly ranked (not very critically) as one of the chief beauties of the tragedy: hence their protests. Right or wrong, then, these judgments stultify the pretence that the scientific method is a mere idolatrous dismissal of offensive matter as such. The pretence, accordingly, reveals itself as the figment of partisans who will spare themselves no strain of misrepresentation.

How the game is played by Authority may be freshly gathered from a minor review in the *Supplement* (21/11/30). Apropos of Mr. H. T. S. Forrest's "The Original 'Venus and Adonis,'" the reviewer writes: "He is a 'disintegrator of Shakespeare' of the school of Mr. J. M. Robertson: one of those whose jealousy for Shakespeare is so great that they take from him the authorship of anything which they do not think first-rate."

It would be improper to disclose the name of this bold anonymous combatant, though his "style" is revelatory. It is sufficient to point out that he either knows the untruth of his assertion or knows nothing of the issue he is handling—which, indeed, is not incompatible with his proposition that Mr. Forrest is of the "school" he specifies.

The sufficient proof of the falsehood of the main charge is that, throughout THE SHAKESPEARE CANON, the priority of Scene i of the ERRORS is insisted on, and the nature of Shakespeare's early versification declared to be shown by that, the earliest traceable sample. Has anyone of any school, then, ever sug-

gested that the verse or substance of the scene in question is "first-rate"? I certainly never did. One of my more orthodox friends, to my great surprise, has pronounced it "mature," but not, I think, "first-rate." In any case, I have declared it genuine. Thus the minor reviewer appears to be revealed as rather unintelligently mendacious. He is, however, at one with more prominent authorities, in both respects, in this particular connection.

But the important fact remains that in certain instances Folio matter critically shown to be non-Shakespearean is such as intelligent students will be glad to be rid of—that is, if they be not of the school of Sir E. K. Chambers, who is convinced that the greatest of all masters of dramatic poetry produced an indefinite amount of sheer rubbish, and that, credited with the finest response to the highest moods of the soul, he was in fact ready to be the willing champion of the basest popular iniquity.

It was on a plain perception and a strong conviction of the thoroughly non-Shakespearean structure, style and rhythm of the Pucelle scenes in *I HENRY VI* that the present writer long ago, partly on the impulse of Swinburne, partly on his own, pronounced them to be *all* non-Shakespearean, the "best" being Marlovian, and the worst the work of Greene and (probably) Peele, in a recast. But for that conviction, tested to the uttermost, he could never have marked them as alien, though to hold them Shakespeare's is to put Shakespeare, at that point, below the moral level of Greene and Peele, because, on that view, the

greater man was deliberately doing base work—base even for them.

And the writer had supposed, with Dr. Allison Gaw, that for the normally healthy mind it would be a comfort to realise, by strict testation of the matter, that the supreme genius had not done the base work at all. That the denigration of Jeanne, in a play which set out with a worthy recognition of her greatness, is a blot on the Folio, had been felt by many honest souls. Before Lecky, the Catholic philanthropist, R. R. Madden, who probably gave Lecky his cue, had written that "The genius of Shakespeare was never so much at fault, and never was so unfaithful to its own glorious instincts and generous impulses, as in the use, most unworthy of its exalted nature, to which it was directed in this instance."¹

Madden, like Lecky, had no inkling whatever of the literary detection, previously made by some critics without the due search for demonstration, of the non-Shakespearean character of the whole play. There was the more satisfaction in setting forth the required proof, which, one supposes, would have been welcome to both Madden and Lecky. But now our academic mentors have created for us a newly remarkable situation, in which they not merely deny all reason for doubting Shakespeare's authorship but vindicate, to their own apparent satisfaction, the ethic of the denigration of the Maid in 1 HENRY VI.

They are quite explicit. Sir E. K. Chambers will

¹ *Phantasmata*, 1857, ii, 124.

only recognise, at most, that "sentimental persons" have *professed* to be shocked over the worst scene. Of the persons thus described as "sentimental," and yet as merely "professing" to hold sentiments, Professor A. W. Pollard happens to be the latest mouthpiece. Very candidly, albeit very inconsistently, he has avowed that he "bitterly" wants Peele "to shoulder the Joan of Arc libels"—a critical mode impossible to the present researcher, and permissible only to a Foliolater of the Right Wing without critical scandal.

For his own part, Sir E. K. Chambers firmly refuses to "assume" that "Shakespeare or any other English national playwright would have cared very much whether he was unjust [*sic*] to a French heroine or not." Sidney, for him, is "quixotic" in such matters; and "patriotic fervour" is to his knowledge "frequently accompanied by the very natural desire to make out its enemies as no better than they ought to be." So that is that. Let it just be noted, in passing, that Sir Edmund had not been asked to "assume" anything whatever, but merely to note the style finger-prints and the structure of the versification, and further the entirely different attitude of the earlier scenes from the later, which have so marked an appearance of recasting. Such scrutiny he had refused to make.

And he is well countenanced by critic A in the *Times Literary Supplement*, as by Professor Dover Wilson. None of these, so far as I have observed, sees any ground for misgiving as to the character

of the dramatist who defiled the memory of *The Maid* any more than for doubting the perfectly Shakespearean character of the text of the play at that or any other point. Is there not then some room for surmise that, by insisting on the technical investigation as a vital need, criticism may in the end carry comfort to the large number of non-academic persons who, like Madden and Lecky—may we add, like the academic Professor A. W. Pollard?—are nauseated by scenes which, if Shakespeare's, make Shakespeare a meaner Peele?

This is but a suggestion. In the face of authoritarian criticism which reduces ethical estimate to the standards of the medieval mob (though there were Englishmen even in Jeanne's day who repudiated them), it would be rash to count on any response from Authority, at Burlington House or elsewhere. Still, among the men and women who study and love Shakespeare, higher standards may find a hearing—despite anæsthetic Authority.

INDEX

- Abercrombie, Prof. L , 3, 4, 6 sq ,
 50 sq., 93 sq., 100, 168, 169,
 170
 Academy, British, 1 sq., 50 sq ,
 76
 Academic practice, 1 sq , 50 sq ,
 147 sq., 175 sq , 180 sq., 187
 Actors' companies, 118, 137
 — plays, 118
 Adams, Prof. J. Q., 88
 Æsthetic criticism, 58 sq , 61 sq ,
 83, 95, 144 sq , 169
 Ainley's Hamlet, 32 n.
Alcida, 121 sq.
 Alexander, P , 2 sq., 7 sq , 51,
 56, 78, 165, 168, 170
All for Love, 5
All's Well that Ends Well, 19, 152
Alphonsus of Arragon, 163
 American scholarship, 2, 116
 Angelo, 65
Antony and Cleopatra, 47 sq , 157
 Antony's oration, 156 sq.
 Apocrypha, the Shakespeare, 88
 Apriorism, 152, 154 sq.
Arden of Feversham, 87 sq., 90
 Arnold, 41, 103
 Authority, 91 ; voice of, 144 sq.
- Baconism, 14
 Bailey, J., 1 sq., 66, 100 sq., 114,
 165, 170
 Baldwin, S., 104
 Beeching, Dean, 62
 Bentley, 144
- Biblical study, 14 sq., 64, 75, 104
 Bibliography, 15, 42, 82 sq , 91
 sq , 94, 151 sq
 Blank-verse, rise of, 163
 Brabine, 162
 Bradley, Prof. A C., 26, 62
 — H , 8 sq
 Bridges, Dr., 29, 39, 179
 Brooke, Dr. Tucker, 2, 88, 171
 Brown, I , 174 n.
 Bryce, Lord, 25, 26
 Budd, Dr , 3, 175
 Burlington House, 16 n., 44, 45,
 62, 76, 193
 Butler, A. J., 182 n.
- Campion, 176
 Catholics and Joan of Arc, 191
 sq.
 Chambers, Sir E K., 4 sq , 8, 16,
 22 sq , 26, 92, 144, 169, 171,
 188, 191 sq.
 Chapman, 104, 146, 148 sq.
 Chaucer, study of, 75
 Chettle, 162
 Clarence's dream, 112, 188
 Cleopatra, 146, 149 sq., 152
 Coleridge, 36 n., 46, 77, 90, 96
 sq., 108
 Collins, Prof. Churton, 4
Comedy of Errors, *The*, 22, 62,
 156, 161, 189
Contention plays, the, 73
 Croce, 100
 Culture, Elizabethan, 63
Cymbeline, 174 n.

Daniel, S., 136 sq., 176
 Denigration of Shakespeare, 24,
 169, 170, 190 sq.
 Denwood, Marley, 150 n.
 Dido, 51
 Disintegrators, alleged, 16 sq., 20,
 92, 144, 189
 Dobrée, B., 5
 Double-endings, 26 sq.; American
 theory on, 116; effect of,
 133, 147, 154 sq., 163 sq., 171
 Dowden, 7, 26 n., 49, 165, 185 n.
 Dryden, 5, 96
 Dyce, 130

Early work, marks of, 62, 115,
 156
 Editors, good work of, 70; sins
 of, 180 sq.
 Education, academic, 62 sq., 76,
 97 sq., 177
Edward III, 74, 87 sq., 117 sq.,
 159
 Emendations, 180 sq., 184 sq.
 End-stopped verse, 129, 156
 Ethical issues, 190 sq.

"First-rate" matter, 189-90
 Fleay, 21, 78, 117 sq.
 Fletcher, 74, 89, 90, 96, 146,
 150 n., 152
 Foliolatry, 5, 67 sq., 77, 89, 92,
 93 sq., 169, 176
 Forbes-Robertson, 31 n.
 Forrest, H. T. S., 189
Friar Bacon, 130
 Fundamentalism, Folio, 93 sq.
 Funds, 1, 17
 Furnivall, 7

Gaw, Dr. Allison, 171, 191
 German heresy, 6
 Ghost-lore, Elizabethan, 36 sq.
 Granville-Barker, H., 26, 29, 40

Greene, 7, 83, 88, 141, 143, 162
 sq., 190; on Shakespeare,
 51 n.; in *Edward III*, 118 sq.;
 versification of, 128 sq., 158.
 sq., 163
 Greg, Dr. W. W., 51, 62
Groatworth of Wit, The, 164

Hal, Prince, 59
 Hallam, 77
Hamlet, 27 sq., 32 sq., 35 sq.,
 45 sq., 184 sq.
 Harris, F., 25
 Harrison, Dr. G. B., 48 sq.
 Hazlitt, 77
 Heminge and Condell, 3, 4, 34,
 52, 66, 78, 95, 101, 117, 165,
 168, 169
Henry IV, Pt. I, 26, 81 sq., 91,
 155, 184
Henry V, 176
Henry VI, Pt. I, 62, 72, 83 sq.,
 97; Pt. III, 24
Henry VIII, 19, 89
 Hickson, 90

Iambic verse sampled, 128 sq.,
 158
 Iconoclasm, 113
 Idolatry, 23, 24
 Imogen, 24
 Ingram, 90
 Isabella, 59

James IV, 130, 159, 164
 James, W., 99
 Joan of Arc, 86, 190 sq.
 Johannines, the, 75
 John, Ivor V., 181
 Jonson, 70, 151 n., 177, 182
 Juliet, 62, 112, 188
Julius Caesar, 20, 106, 156 sq.

Katharina, 21 n., 22
 Keats, versification of, 160 sq.

- King John*, 112, 155
King Lear, 183 sq. (See *Lear*)
 Knight, Charles, 77, 181 sq.
 Kyd, 33, 70, 83, 119, 163

 Lamb, on *Lear*, 39 sq.; on *Titus*, 77
 Lavater on Ghosts, 38 n., 45, 46
Lear, 39 sq.
 Lecky, 191
 Lee, Sir Sidney, 48
 Legouis, Prof., 3, 25, 107 sq., 170
 Linear verse, 133 sq. (See *Versification*)
Locrine, 142
 Logic, professional, 10, 67 sq., 121 sq., 152 sq., 154 sq.
Love's Labour's Lost, 143
Love's Labour's Won, 143

 Mackail, Prof., 25, 26, 62
 McKerrow, Dr., 25
 Madden, 191, 193
Maiden's Dream, The, 140
 Malone, 46, 77, 108
 Mariana, 65
 Marlowe, 22, 62, 105, 112, 118 sq., 130, 163, 177, 188
 Mason, Monck, 152, 181
 Massinger, 90, 96
Measure for Measure, 3, 19, 152, 175
Menaphon, 122
Merchant of Venice, The, 141, 143
 Mercutio, 112
 Meredith, 89 sq.
 Meres, 73
Merry Wives of Windsor, The, 22
Midsummer Night's Dream, A, 112, 131 sq., 140, 155, 161
 Milton, 1, 70, 71, 96, 101 sq., 177, 187
 Mimicry of style, 71
Morning Post, The, 9

Much Ado, 112

 Nashe, 113, 162, 165
 Nicoll, Prof. A., 35, 40 n.
 Nurse (in *R. and J.*), 112

 Østerberg, Lektor, 117 sq.
Othello, 30, 157
Ovid's Banquet of Sense, 149 sq.

Paradise Lost, 179
 Parrott, Prof., 171
Passionate Pilgrim, The, 74
 Patriotic ethic, 190-3
 Pauline Letters, the, 75
 Peele, 88, 190 sq.
Philomela, 125
Pericles, 6, 19, 77, 125, 150 n.
 Plague and theatres, 119 sq.
 Plagiarism, Elizabethan, 138
 Pliny, 148, 151
 Plutarch, 148
 Pollard, Prof. A. W., 4, 7, 50, 52, 65, 83, 86, 91, 92, 93, 95, 117, 165, 170, 171, 192, 193
 Polomus, 27 sq.
 Porson, 144
 Portia, 63
 Protestant thought, 36 sq., 65

 Quiller-Couch, Sir A., 17, 20

 Raleigh, Prof. Sir W., 101
Rape of Lucrece, The, 124 sq., 136, 137, 139
 Revolutions, literary, 77 sq.
 Reynaldo scene-section, 27 sq., 157, 177 sq., 184
 Rhythm, 130, 131 sq. (See *Versification*)
Richard II, 180
Richard III, 20, 188
 Robey, George, 167
 "Romantics", the, 77, 107 sq.
Romeo and Juliet, 24, 112, 143

Roses scene, the, 89, 188
Rosamond, 136

Salvini, 40

Scansions, 179 sq.

Schlegel, 46, 88

Sejanus, 182

Shakespeare, accused of spoiling
 Marlowe, 3; credited with a
 "vast vocabulary", 8; study
 of, 13 sq.; disintegration of,
 16 sq.; alleged collaboration
 by, 19; versification of, 22,
 26, 96 sq., 121, 131 sq., 155,
 166, 172, 176 sq.; charged
 with early drunkenness, 3, 25,
 110 sq., 170, 171; accused of
 erotomania, 25; charged with
 writing much rubbish, 24, 95,
 190; alleged study of law, 25;
 "responsibility" charged on,
 55 sq., 169; style of, 67 sq.,
 87 sq., 114 sq., accused of
 being the "least equal" of
 great masters, 102; credited
 with the Countess scenes in
Edward III, 117 sq.; Sonnet
 xciv, 122 sq.; Sonnet cvii, 49;
 and Greene, 138 sq.; charged
 with vulgar ethic, 171, 190 sq.;
 credited with knowing Italian
 and French, 176; early Son-
 nets of, 112

Shakespeare Canon, *The*, 5, 47,
 48, 152, 188

Shücking, Prof., 35 sq.

Sidgwick, Prof. H., 21

Sidney, 192

Sir Thomas More, 74

Smart, Dr., 51 n.

Solipsism, critical, 169

Spedding, 90

Steevens 151

Stoll, Prof., 3, 35 sq., 113

Styles in the Folio, 67 sq., 114 sq.
 Swinburne, 78, 83 sq., 90, 103,
 105, 117, 190
 Sykes, Dugdale, 150 n.

Talbot death-scenes, the, 88

Taming of A Shrew, *The*, 21

Taming of The Shrew, *The*, 21
 sq., 82 sq., 94

Tests, false accounts of, 47, 111
 sq., 188 sq., 192

Tempest, *The*, 152

Tennyson, 83 sq., 90, 117, 124,
 126

Text-corruption, 180 sq.

Theobald, Lewis, 46

Time on the stage, 28 sq.

Times Lit. Sup. criticisms, 81 sq.,
 116, 144 sq., 169

Timon of Athens, 19, 89

Titus Andronicus, 2, 4, 19, 56,
 66, 72, 77, 86, 92, 100, 165 sq.,
 170

"To be" soliloquy, the, 35 sq.,
 38, 45

Troilus and Cressida, 89

Twelfth Night, 112

Two Gentlemen of Verona, *The*,
 88, 90, 120 sq., 141, 158 sq.,
 161, 162 sq.

Two Noble Kinsmen, *The*, 74

Tyrwhitt, 75

Venus and Adonis, 189

Versification, 22, 26, 90, 120,
 126 sq., 131 sq., 155, 166, 172,
 176 sq., 187

Vocabulary, Shakespeare's, 8

Warburton, 151

Wilson, Prof. J. Dover, 6, 8, 16
 sq., 53 sq., 91 sq., 164, 171, 184
 sq., 188, 192